Saturday Review

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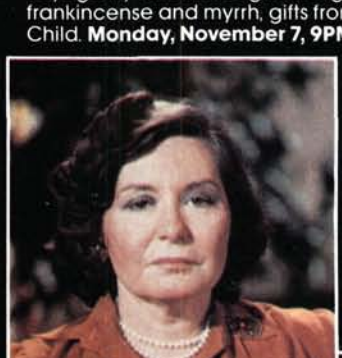
AT THE MET: VOYAGES: The Journey of the Magi. Jerusalem and Bethlehem form the backdrop of a trip filmed with host Karl Katz along the trail of the three Magi, from Judaea to their encounter with the Infant Jesus. Highlights include various interpretations of that famous voyage by artists through the ages and the origins of frankincense and myrrh, gifts from the Magi to the Christ Child. **Monday, November 7, 9PM.**

TINTYPES. The original Broadway cast reassembles to present a musical portrait of Turn-of-the-Century America, using the music of John Phillips Sousa, Scott Joplin and George M. Cohan. **Tuesday, November 8, 9PM.**



FIRST EDITION. Maureen Howard, author of "Grace Abounding," talks about the coming of age of her characters on this popular, in-depth literary series hosted by book critics John Leonard and Nancy Evans. **Friday, November 4, 10PM (and every Friday at 10PM.)**

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. Acclaimed actor William Hurt stars as Oberon in Shakespeare's best-known comedy of mismatched love, produced by theatrical entrepreneur Joseph Papp. **Tuesday, November 1, 9PM.**

ARTS AT SOTHEBY'S: THE LUBOSHEZ COLLECTION. The preparation and sale of Captain Ferris Luboshez' extraordinary collection of Chinese art at the world's best-known auction house, Sotheby Parke Bernet. Captain Luboshez reminisces about his collection as the behind the scenes auction excitement mounts. **Monday, November 28, 9PM.**

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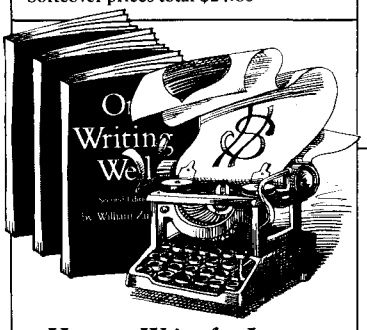

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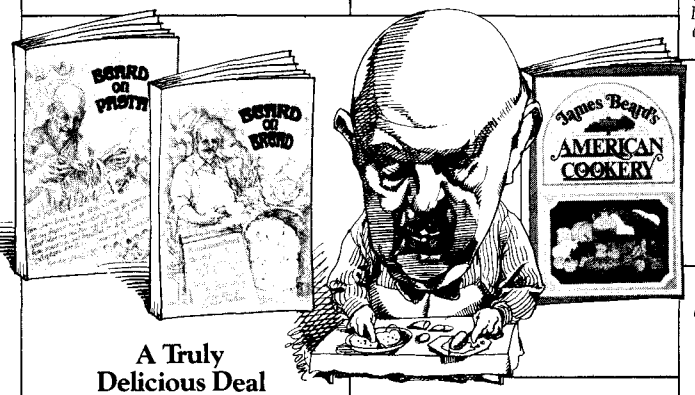

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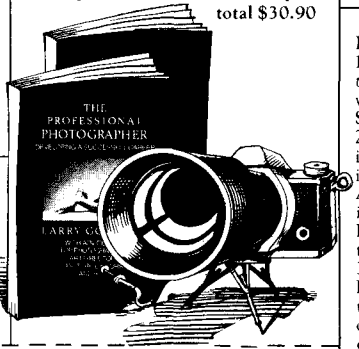

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LETTERS

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I am furious at Stanley Kauffmann. His report on Marsha Norman's play, *'night, Mother,* seethes with professional jealousy. He criticizes her talent, her accomplishment, and even her integrity. After all, she did win the Pulitzer Prize. Somebody must think she knows a thing or two *and* how to write about what she knows.

Elva Wolcott
Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

I was delighted with the Kinnell article. I, too, shared frustration in interpreting *Under the Maud Moon* until a letter from Kinnell set my class straight. A truly elegant poem.

Velma Biddle
Holyoke, Connecticut

I enjoyed the review by Joel Elkes of Norman Cousins' book, *The Healing Heart,* in the Sept.-Oct. issue. Cousins gives eloquent expression to truths that many doctors have discovered in the daily practice of medicine. It will indeed be a glorious day for medicine when we can discover someone within our own ranks who can give such clear and sincere expression to the intimate and real relationships between body, mind, and illness.

Edward J. Volpintesta, M.D.
Bethel, Connecticut

In searching for a villain to account for "the big trouble in education" (*SR*, Sept.-Oct.), Thomas Middleton finds two: the proponents of linguistics and the National Council of Teachers of English.

Neither the proponents of linguistics nor NCTE argues that written language is not language (as I suspect Mr. Middleton knows), but rather that speech is *the* basic language from which writing derives—as anyone who has reared a child surely knows.

People in Shakespeare's time referred to the Prince of Wales as "the royal imp," but you won't find the present editor of *The London Times* allowing such a usage. Both decisions are "correct," which means, as far as I can see, that "correctness rests on usage" and "all usage is relative."

John I. Ades
Edwardsville, Illinois

I read the "Afterthoughts" column of the Sept.-Oct. *Saturday Review,* with particular reference to "had no recollection."

Perhaps I'm missing something here, but do you not remember, or did you ever know, that this was the crux of one of Nixon's tapes, in which he advised one of his officials to use this phraseology? Apparently it has some legal basis and means something specific in that, while you may be held for lying if you say you don't remember, having no recollection is not lying if you later recall it. As I get it, remembering it later is still lying.

You go on to discuss this in some detail, and I wondered if it were possible that you had not seen or did not know about this tape of Nixon's, which received considerable publicity in 1973.

Jon B. Jolly
Seattle, Washington

Editor's note: *We may have known of Nixon's order to his henchman at one time, but we have no recollection of it now.*

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Catastrophe by Computer

Some time ago in these pages, I wrote about electronic chess. What seemed especially noteworthy at that time was not just that the computer could play a sophisticated game, but that its physical dimensions were so modest. Thirty years or so ago, some specialists believed it would be impossible to construct a chess computer because of size requirements. One computer expert said the first three moves would require a device the size of a cigar box. To get as far as the sixth move would call for a machine the size of a clothes closet. By the twelfth move, the machine would need a structure twice the size of the Pentagon. All this, of course, was before the reign of transistors and, more recently, of silicon chips. Today, a computer chess machine has all its thinking equipment contained under the playing surface of the board in a space less than two inches deep.

Some things are significant about the chess-playing computer. First is the high quality of play. It has a systematic plan of attack. At the same time, it is careful not to expose any of its own pieces to attack without retaliation. In this respect, the machine belies the usual criticism made of computers; namely, that they are incapable of doing and anticipating complex choices. This machine examines its options and has a fairly good idea of what is going on in its opponent's mind. The quality of its play improves noticeably in proportion to the time it takes between moves. It is not just a computing machine but a thinking machine. It understands the process of cause and effect; it can look far down a road and identify factors affecting its decision. It can be an implacable and remorseless opponent. It does not hesitate to pounce upon any oversight. It will not observe the amenities and point out an obvious error. It lacks manners.

But this thinking machine is not infallible. What is most interesting and perhaps significant about its behavior is that, under certain circumstances, it can become flustered. If it is suddenly confronted by a highly unorthodox and massed attack, for example, it can lose its cool and go stumbling all over the board, adding peril to predicament, self-insult to self-injury. This ludicrous state of affairs doesn't happen very often, but it is a spectacle when it does. It prompts reflections about the use of sophisticated computers in society, and the degree of control they have over our lives. Indeed, the lives of hundreds of millions of people ride on the ability of computers to monitor national security.

Because of the danger of a surprise nuclear-missile attack on the United States, with warning time limited not to hours but to minutes, the nation's military planners employ computers as an integral part of our defense strategy. Since there is no way to protect the American people against attacking missiles, our range of action is limited to retaliatory response. It is conceivable that a computer error or errors could touch off a full-scale nuclear war, setting fire to hundreds of cities, killing millions of people, and changing conditions of life on this planet. Are attack-alert mechanisms impervious to error? Is it possible that computers can yield erroneous and dangerous information when confronted with unorthodox moves not anticipated by the programmers? Can computers go berserk, taking with them whole societies?

The answer is that errors have already occurred in the computerized military warning systems. In the past five years, according to some defense-watchers, computers have produced more than a hundred false alerts. Fortunately for most of the people living in the U.S. and U.S.S.R., and for a great many others, these errors were spotted early enough to prevent the release of our own nuclear-tipped missiles. A recent motion picture, *WarGames,* has as its theme the capability of an ingenious youngster to penetrate the Pentagon's computer codes and touch off a nuclear alert. There are many far-fetched aspects of the film, which U.S. military officials have been quick to point out, but what is basically relevant is the computer's central role in the decision-making process that can lead to nuclear war, and the demonstrated fact of computer fallibility. It is not inconceivable that a computer error would not be caught in time.

Is there no way to educate the American people to the reality that present methods of protecting the national security are unworkable? How can we gain attention for the truth that control of force, and not the pursuit of force, should be at the heart of national policy? How long will we stumble toward the nuclear brink before we recognize that unfettered national sovereignty in a nuclear age is producing the most costly madness known to history? What must be done to construct new approaches to peace based on definable and enforceable codes of behavior in the world arena? The most serious question of all: when will thinking people think seriously about the things that count?

These questions are beyond the ken of computers. Only people can answer them. **-N.C.**

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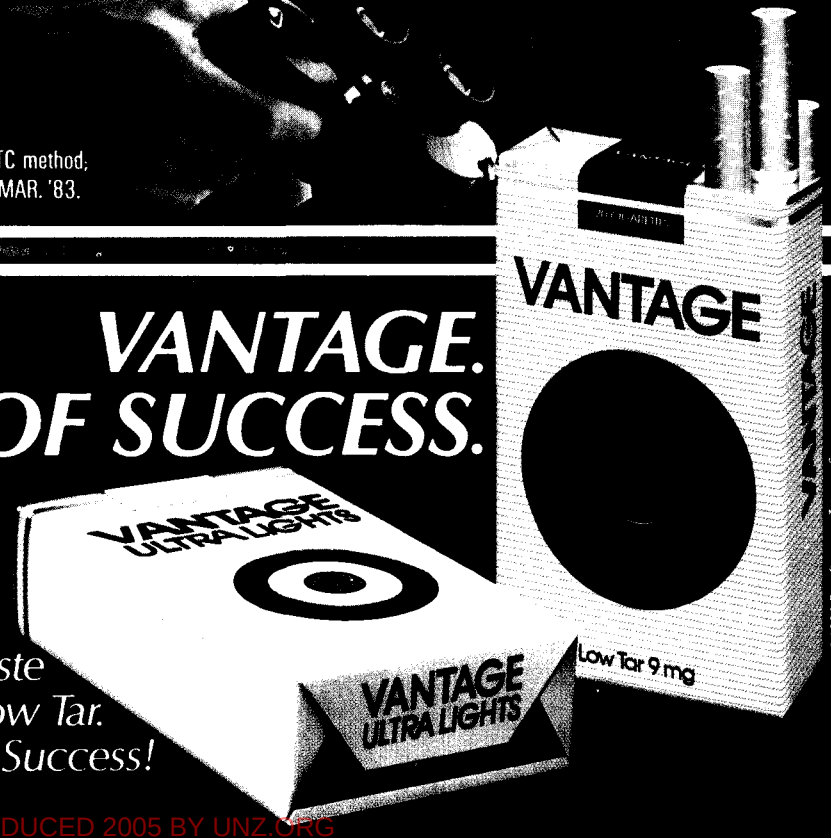

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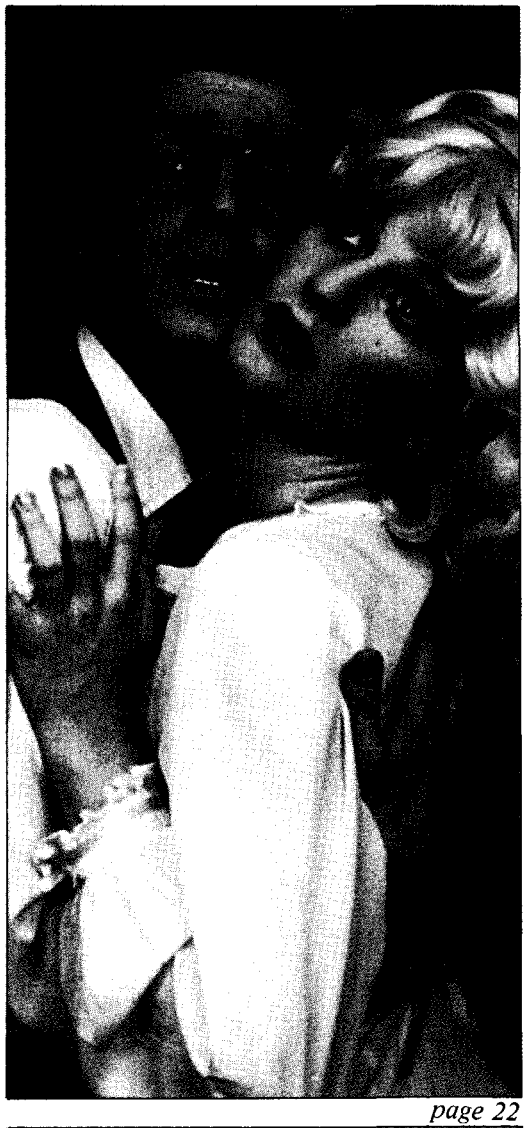

PETER CUNNINGHAM

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"Hockney Paints the Stage"

Since he first appeared on the art scene during the 1960s, English painter David Hockney has achieved international recognition for his paintings, drawings, prints, and most recently, photographs and stage designs. His first theater sets were for the Royal Court's 1966 production of *Ubi Roi* in London. Recently he has directed his talents to the design of sets and costumes for the opera, where he continues the tradition of such important visual artists as Picasso and Robert Rauschenberg in designing for the stage.

***The Rake's Progress*, (1975) Glyndebourne Festival Opera.**

In developing stage designs, Hockney has made use of imagery from the range of art history. He has also been heavily influenced by the atmosphere of Southern California, where he now lives, and Egyptian iconography, including pyramids, stone heads, obelisks, palm trees, and schematic figures in profile.

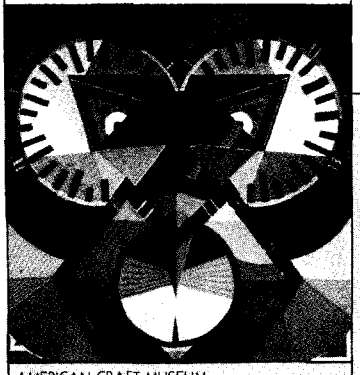
An exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis features more than 250 objects, including 150 drawings and gouaches, twenty-five theater-set models, set elements, and approximately thirty Hockney paintings from the early 1960s to the present that foreshadow or were derived from his theater designs. The Art Center's galleries will be treated as a series of theatrical environments in which sets from eight operatic works will be re-created and models and actual set pieces displayed. During the exhibition, the Art Center will screen a multi-image slide-tape presentation on Hockney's theater productions, relating them to the tradition of artists designing for the stage. After its premiere in Minneapolis from November 20 through January 22, *Hockney Paints the Stage* will travel to Mexico City; Toronto; Chicago; Fort Worth, Texas; and San Francisco. □

The Art of Quilting

Contemporary quilt-making is moving in a new direction, away from traditional patterns toward more personal forms of expression. Surface techniques such as painting, stamping, printing, batiking, photo silk-screening, airbrushing, drawing, dyeing, and embroidering are employed to change the face of the contemporary quilt. Artists now draw upon subjects as diverse as magic carpets, music, and astronomy.

More than 300 artists from the United States, Canada, Switzerland, England, and Australia submitted 700 slides to *Quilt National '83*, a biennial competition sponsored by The Dairy Barn, Southeastern Ohio Cultural Arts Center, to promote contemporary quilting as an art form. A selection of thirty-six of the seventy-eight winning entries appears at the American Craft Museum II in New York City from November 4 through December 30 as part of a national tour circulated by the Ohio Foundation on the Arts. □

Quilt by Françoise Barnes (80" x 80").



AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM

Judaic Treasures

As the Nazis sent Jews to their deaths during World War II, they sent their possessions to Prague, Czechoslovakia, to become part of a "museum to an extinct race." A Nazi charter established a "Central Jewish Museum" to collect and store Jewish possessions of historical and artistic value. The outside world was told that these possessions were being taken into temporary custody until they could be restored to their proper owners. The same fastidiousness that characterized the Nazi war machine was applied to the collection and preservation of Jewish artifacts: books and manuscripts, paintings, folk crafts, furniture, clothing, and religious objects. While the Holocaust destroyed ninety percent of European Jewish cultural artifacts, the Nazis amassed more than 94,000 items, filling eight buildings in Prague's Jewish Quarter and fifty warehouses throughout the city.

The Jewish curators hoped they could preserve the legacy of European Jewry, and their concern and care for these objects was their silent resistance to the Nazis. In the end, most of the Jewish curators were also sent to their deaths. The collection was offered in 1949 as a gift to the Czechoslovak government.

The Precious Legacy: Judaic Treasures from the Czechoslovak State Collections is an exhibition of more than 350 objects of religious and secular use in Jewish daily life during the last five centuries, as well as drawings from the Terezin concentration camp. It appears at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History from November 9 through December 31 and will travel to Miami Beach, Florida; New York City; San Diego; Detroit; and Hartford, Connecticut. □

GEORGE PLATT LYNES

Tennessee Williams (1944).

Tennessee Williams' First

Tennessee Williams began *The Glass Menagerie* in 1943 while he was a scriptwriter for MGM in Hollywood. Instead of writing the scenario that MGM requested, Williams worked on an original script about an aging Southern belle, which MGM promptly turned down. Williams split from MGM and converted his scenario into a stage play that was destined to be the first of his plays produced on Broadway. The world premiere of *The Glass Menagerie* took place on December 26, 1944, in Chicago, where it ran for four months. It opened on Broadway in the spring of 1945 and was an immediate and enormous success. On the twenty-fifth curtain call opening night, the producer called Williams onstage to take a bow. A few weeks later, the play won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award as best play of the year.

A new production of *The Glass Menagerie* opens on Broadway December 1 after a one-month pre-Broadway run at the Mechanic Theatre in Baltimore. The show stars Jessica Tandy in the role of Amanda Wingfield. Tandy is well-known for her Tony Award-winning performance as Blanche Dubois in Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which followed *The Glass Menagerie* to Broadway in 1947. Amanda Plummer, who received a Tony for her performance in *Agnes of God*, co-stars as Laura Wingfield. Also co-starring are John Heard and Bruce Davison, who starred on Broadway in the title role of *The Elephant Man*. The show is directed by John Dexter, with sets by Ming Cho Lee and costumes by Patricia Zipprodt. *The Glass Menagerie* marks the beginning of the career of one of America's most prolific and important playwrights, whose death earlier this year left a void in American theater. □

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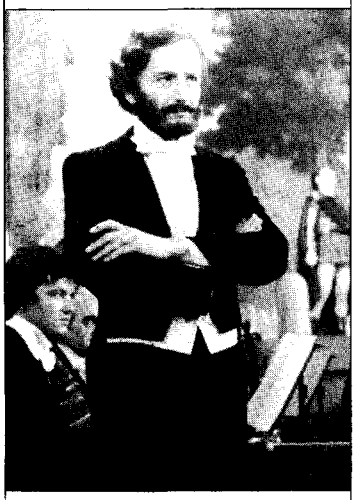
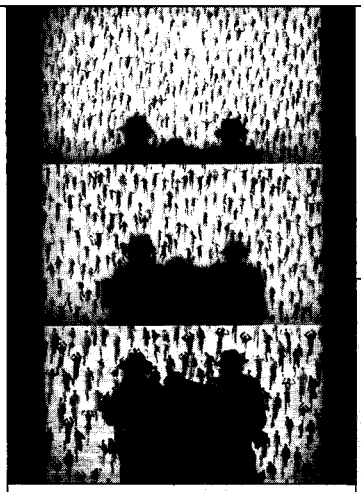
An Italian God

In Italy Giuseppe Verdi is treated like a god. Born there as a peasant in 1813, he lived eighty-three years and composed twenty-eight of the world's greatest operas. Verdi began studying music at a young age and was soon writing his own compositions. He had the good fortune to study in Milan and later to perform his first opera there. After this modest success, he suffered the greatest tragedies of his life: within the space of two years, his wife and two infant children died. With his second opera, *Nabucco,* he became one of the most popular composers of his day. He developed a scandalous relationship with the lead singer, Giuseppina Strepponi, which would last for years and eventually culminate in marriage. The operas he wrote during the remainder of his life include *La traviata, Aida, Otello,* and *Falstaff,* the last one written when he was 80.



Giuseppe Verdi as portrayed by Ronald Pickup.

The life of this remarkable man is presented in a six-part series, *The Life of Verdi,* on PBS's Great Performances. Burt Lancaster hosts and narrates this re-creation of the composer's life and times. Ronald Pickup stars as Verdi. Carla Fracci, the renowned European ballerina, makes her acting debut as Strepponi. Writer-director Renato Castellani spent several years researching Verdi's life and selecting locations before writing the script. The production comprises more than 100 actors, 18,000 extras, 4,000 costumes, and filming locations throughout Europe. When shown in Italy, the show won the largest audience ever on Italian television. *The Life of Verdi* runs on Monday nights from October 24 through November 28. □



***The Prisoner,* Juan Genoves.**

HIRSHHORN MUSEUM COLLECTION

"Dreams and Nightmares"

New movements in art between 1910 and 1935 characterized the belief that art and architecture played a central role in the formation of the New World. The Modernists who devoted themselves to the formation of this New World were the Italian Futurists, the Russian avant-gardists (Suprematists, Constructivists, and others), a few German Expressionists and the German Bauhaus school, the international de Stijl group, the French Purists, and some American painters, architects, and designers. Artists from these various countries and schools had surprisingly similar utopian convictions. Most welcomed scientific, technological, and industrial advances as the means of achieving the new social order, an order they believed would be characterized by dynamism, precision, abundance, cleanliness, and efficiency. Many of these artists felt that abstraction could best convey the principles of universal order, selflessness, and truth that they anticipated in this utopia.

Dystopian, or anti-utopian, art developed after World War II, reflecting an increasingly pessimistic world view. Art from this period either showed despair or revealed potential dangers that should be averted. Both views have essentially the same goal of creating a better existence.

The Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C., will present *Dreams and Nightmares: Utopian Visions in Modern Art,* an exhibition that surveys artists' visionary conceptions of future societies. Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky, Fernand Léger, and Buckminster Fuller are among the thirty-five utopian artists represented. George Grosz, Ben Shahn, and Ernest Trova are among the twenty-seven dystopian artists sampled. The exhibit runs from December 8 through February 12. □

The Filming of Modern Dance

Since its beginning in the late nineteenth century, Modern dance has been recorded on film. The early film work of the Thomas Edison Company evolved into contemporary dance films that employ unusual visual effects to enhance the dance performance.

The development of the art of Modern dance and of the film making that documents it is the subject of a two-week FilmDance Festival at New York's Public Theatre. The festival shows the expansion of Modern and Postmodern dance into a media art form, in which the filming and the dance are of equal importance. The first of its kind, the festival traces the evolution of the filming of dance from the 1890s to the present. This comprehensive retrospective of dance films includes the categories of Cine-Dance, Dance and Environment, Dance and Optical Illusion, Postmodern and Modern Documentary, FilmDance Drama, Turn-of-the-Century FilmDance, and Black FilmDance. More than fifty artists are represented in the festival's twenty programs. Highlights of the festival include two sessions with Ernie Smith on "The Black Tradition in Tap Dancing," in which he intersperses his lecture with film clips. An abbreviated version of the festival will tour nationally and internationally after its appearance in New York City November 29 through December 11. □

Shaping American Art

Willem de Kooning moved to the U.S. from Rotterdam, Netherlands, in 1926. He soon became one of the major forces in shaping a new American art. As part of the Federal Art Project in the mid-Thirties, de Kooning worked with other artists to produce murals for public buildings. On his own he experimented with new methods of painting and drawing. He believed in a process of metamorphosis and would paint and repaint a canvas in order to resolve an image, often never completing his works. He also used a method of collage, in which he would destroy images and reconstruct them into new forms. This technique led to his most abstract paintings of the early 1960s. In his works, de Kooning incorporates his observations of daily life, shifting from abstract to figurative representation, with figures often used as the basis for his abstract work.

Two major exhibitions of work by de Kooning are being presented simultaneously at the Whitney Museum of American Art. *The Drawings of Willem de Kooning* includes approximately 130 sheets and provides the first in-depth survey of this aspect of the artist's work. Spanning sixty years, the drawings will range from his student work of the 1920s and the subsequent figurative and abstract images that developed in the 1930s and 1940s, through the pastels of women done in the 1980s. *Willem de Kooning Retrospective Exhibition 1938-1983* presents approximately 100 paintings and twenty-five sculptures. Included are abstract works of the 1930s, a series of seated male and female portraits of the early 1940s, several major abstractions of the 1940s, many of the famous "Woman" paintings of the mid-1950s, abstractions of the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as his most recent work. After appearing in New York from December 7 through February 26, the exhibitions will travel together to Berlin and Paris. □

***Seated Woman,* Willem de Kooning.**

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The J.B. Factor

As an ex-convict, J.J. Maloney is familiar with the penal system and the factors that cause it to fail. As a writer, he reveals its flaws and offers a radical proposal for reform.

BY J. J. MALONEY

J.J. Maloney was convicted of murder as a teen-ager. He served thirteen years in the Missouri State Penitentiary for his crime. While in solitary confinement after an escape attempt, he began to write poetry. The book editor of The Kansas City Star *came across his work and helped him to gain parole in 1972. During the next six years, while Maloney worked as a reporter for* The Star, *he received the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award and the Kansas Bar Association's Media Award for a series of investigative articles on Missouri and Kansas prisons. His first novel,* I Speak for the Dead, *was published last fall by Andrews and McMeel and has been optioned for a movie. His second novel,* The Chain, *recently was purchased by Berkeley Publishing Corporation. In this essay, Maloney presents a radical proposal for prison reform based on his experiences both inside and outside of the system.*

The photographs are from the award-winning book, Concrete Mama: Prison Profiles from Walla Walla. *The photographer, Ethan Hoffman, and the writer, John McCoy, spent one year inside the Washington State Penitentiary at Walla Walla interviewing and photographing inmates for a series of profiles, some of which parallel personalities that Maloney details.*

J.B. was a street kid from South St. Louis, a nice-looking, bright kid with a drive to be somebody. But he was impatient. Working for a living took too much time. He wanted some money immediately. One night he and a friend walked into a tavern to rob it. A cop came in and went for his gun. J.B. shot him. The cop died, and J.B. was sentenced to life imprisonment.

J.B. was tough and became a minor legend in prison. He tried to escape, and his status rose among the convicts. For a while he was poor, so he robbed other convicts of their cigarettes and commissary books. Then a friend got out of prison and started sending dope to him through a guard. He was getting amphetamine in by the ounce and selling it to other convicts. That made him a king. He used this income to start poker games and lending operations. He eventually was making more than $1,000 a month, a staggering sum in a world where the average convict might have $15 a month to spend. The average guard's salary then was only a third of what J.B. was making.

J.B. had settled in for the long haul. He no longer thought about escaping.

Personal furniture was permitted in the prison, and J.B. had the best: a big mirror, a dresser, a bedspread. He also had a locker full of tuna, candy bars, and cookies. He had an Omega watch, a diamond ring, and other jewelry in his dresser. He had a good-looking young boy to take care of his baser needs. His cell door was often left open, and he would wander around the cell block. He had guards on his payroll. If someone wanted a cell change, he could arrange it. In time he became a major legend. Ex-convicts would sit in South St. Louis taverns and regale each other with stories of J.B.'s exploits in the joint.

After a scandal that culminated in the suicide of the warden, new officials were hired to run the prison. One of the ways they decided to demonstrate their control was to "break" J.B.

They boldly moved him from cell 52, where he had lived for years. They confiscated his dresser and broke it into kindling. In a dramatic move, they cut the diamond ring from his finger.

J.B. took it all good-humoredly. The attention was flattering. He had never stood higher in the eyes of the convicts. The officials changed the shape but not the substance of his existence. He now wore a Timex watch (the only kind permitted). He wore the most bedraggled sweat shirt he could find, in an effort to convince the officials he had been pauperized. He became more tractable. He even joshed with the warden on occasion. The warden bragged to visiting journalists that J.B. would call him on the phone from the powerhouse and shoot the breeze with him. Without realizing it, the very warden who had set out to "break" J.B. was now wallowing in his shadow.

J.B. still sold dope, had a punk, and accumulated cigarettes and candy bars; he was still somebody.

He began to feed the officials tidbits of information to convince them he was rehabilitated. J.B. would even tell the warden where to find a gallon of hooch, that sort of thing—never anything that would get another con-

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vict in trouble. He probably planted the hooch himself, then told the prison officials where to find it.

Finally he convinced them he had changed, and he was paroled.

In the free world he quickly learned there is no market for a consummate prison hustler. He may have had the brains, but he lacked the education to get a high-paying job. Instead he took a menial job and scraped by. He probably stared wistfully at the people driving Mercedes and wearing Brooks Brothers suits.

Here was a man who had everything in prison and nothing outside of it. The only people who respected him were ex-convicts.

Prison was on his mind. He periodically called the warden, probably sensing he would be going back, and wanting to ensure a job and good treatment when he did. No one expressed it better than Milton when he wrote, "Better to reign in hell than serve in heav'n."

Not long after his release, J.B. was shot and killed while attempting a robbery.

J.B. is a classic example of what is wrong with American prisons. For him, prison became an acceptable alternative, as it does for the young convicts who aspired to be like him.

Thirty percent of those who go to prison become recidivists. In 1968 there were about 200,000 convicts; 60,000 of them fell into the recidivist category. By the end of this decade there will be 1 million convicts, giving us a recidivist pool of 300,000, and growing at the rate of more than 30,000 a year.

Prison officials across the country are stunned by the number of convicts flooding in. America has been in the right-wing mood for a decade, as demonstrated by efforts to roll back civil rights legislation—affirmative action in particular—and by a chipping away at welfare programs. It is most visible in the current get-tough policy toward social malefactors. Several states have abolished parole, or have passed laws requiring a wait of fifty years. Sentences for virtually all crimes have been lengthened, and legislation defining new crimes is created almost daily.

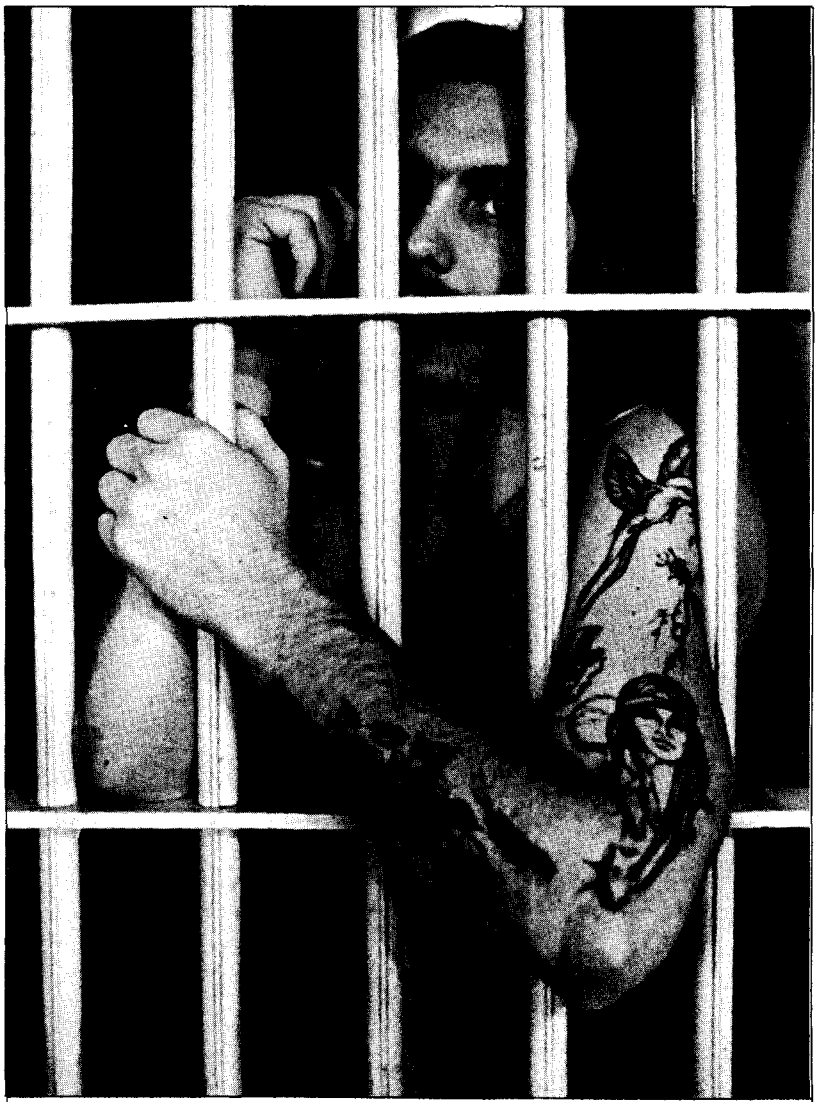
In response to this surge in incarceration, John Sullivan, the Delaware correction commissioner, commented in the June 1983 issue of *Corrections Magazine,* "If we continue to grow at the rate we have for the last twenty months, in twenty years the entire population of the state will be incarcerated."

In Texas, more than 4,000 convicts are living in tents at fifteen of the state's twenty-five prisons. California is getting ready to build tent cities at San Quentin and Chino. Prison officials in the South are scurrying to find Quonset huts, but most have been bought by prison systems elsewhere. In Missouri the prison population has jumped from 3,300 in 1972 to 7,800, and the system is gaining 100 convicts a month.

By the end of 1982, there were 412,000 men and women in American prisons, an increase of 11.6 percent over the previous year. The actual increase was higher, because many prisons were refusing to admit new convicts until they had room. Instead people are crowded in jails waiting for prison space.

If the Reagan administration's efforts to abolish parole nationally are successful, the system could collapse overnight. While 622,000 people were serving time in jails and prisons in 1982, an additional 1.4 million were on probation or parole. In 1972 ninety-three out of every 100,000 adults were in prison in the United States, the highest rate in the Western world. By 1982 this figure had risen to 170.

ETHAN HOFFMAN / ARCHIVE



A prisoner in solitary confinement.

An overcrowded prison is a small city filled with desperate people, finagling, manipulating, trying to get dope, booze, and sex, trying to beat the system, trying to prove themselves, trying, above all, to survive. The following incidents occurred while I was incarcerated. They don't even scratch the surface of what goes on in a maximum-security prison.

- A 21-year-old boy was stabbed to death with a large ice pick and sodomized while he was dying. He had less than a month to serve.
- A 16-year-old black boy refused to let a group sodomize him. He was stabbed to death in the shower and rolled up in a piece of rug.

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• A young convict who had been hounded by an older convict for sex finally stabbed the older man to death. While he was in solitary for the killing, his cellmate raped him.

• A man working in the kitchen killed a convict with a meat cleaver. He told the guards Moses told him to do it.

• A convict worker in the school was stabbed to death. The killer had just been returned from a state hospital and thought the victim was staring at him.

• A man was stabbed in the eye when he failed to pay a debt. He owed four packs of cigarettes.

• A 20-year-old convict broke both of his hands fighting off sexual assaults in the receiving unit. While he was in the prison hospital, with both hands in casts, he was raped at knife point.

• A convict went to a movie and was stabbed in the back. He lost a lung and two ribs. The man who stabbed him later apologized, saying he had mistaken the victim for someone else.

Rehabilitation is not possible in this kind of setting. And neither are extended sentences a solution to crime.

The modern prison system developed over a period of two centuries. As long ago as 1831, it was declared a failure. Alexis de Tocqueville said then, after surveying U.S. prisons, "Nowhere was this system of imprisonment crowned with the hoped-for success. It never effected the reformation of the prisoners."

From that point on there has never been a consensus on what a prison should be like, who should go to prison, what prisons can be expected to accomplish, or how they should accomplish it.

Rehabilitation itself is a much abused word. At various times it was thought that solitude was the answer, or backbreaking work, or psychoanalysis, or education, or simply understanding. When all was said and done, none of them worked.

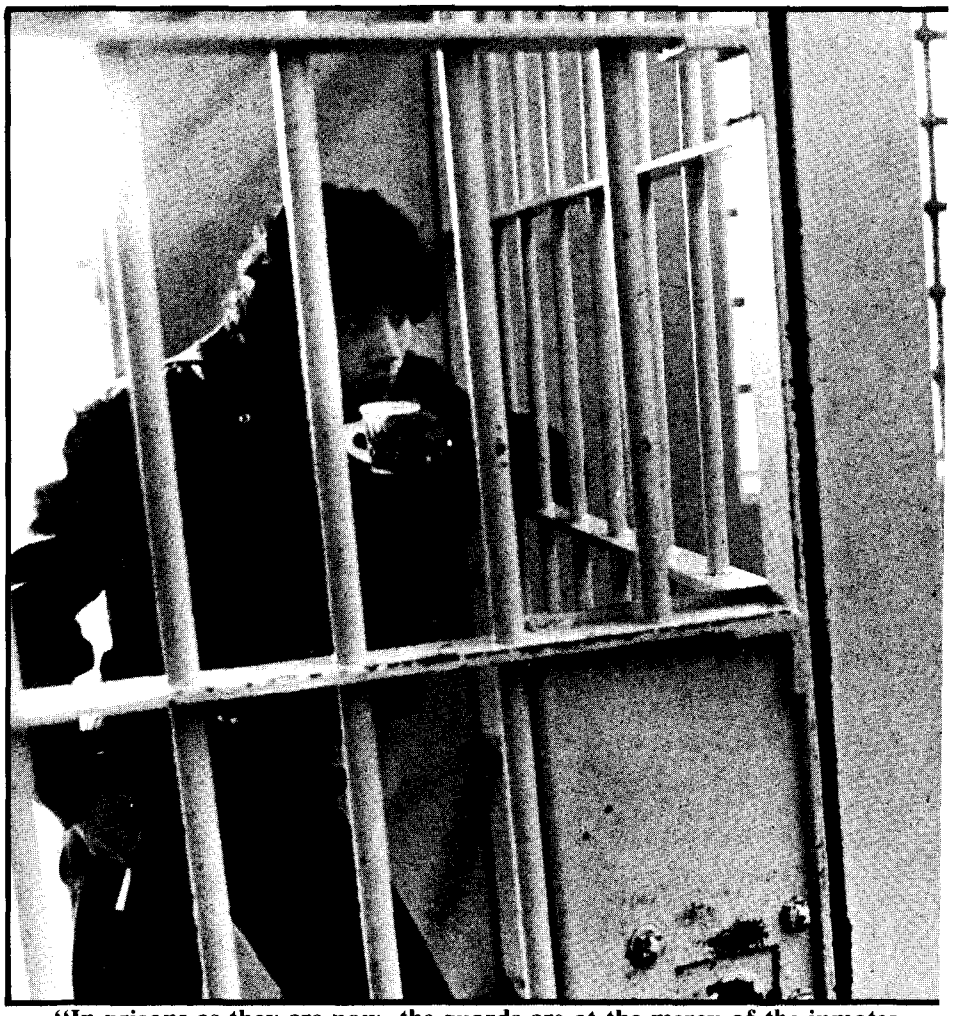
Instead, we need to understand the dual development in prisons of this century: they have become more lenient as sentences have grown longer. At the urging of well-meaning people, prisons have been infused with amenities, ostensibly to make them more humane. They now have liberties such as correspondence and visiting rules that in some states extend to conjugal visits, weekly telephone calls, commissary privileges, furlough programs, radios, televisions, personalized clothing, magazines, extended yard time, beards and mustaches, and private rooms.

These are not available at all prisons, but that is the trend. Prison reform has been confused with increasing comforts. Many prisons offer more comfort than the U.S. Army offered its soldiers in 1959.

This is one of the primary factors behind the increased length of prison sentences. These amenities have clouded the public's judgment. As people perceive prison becoming luxurious, they assume it will take longer to accomplish punishment and rehabilitation. The true nature of prison, the terrifying underbelly of it, is only visible to the people who are there. Those outside, as well as the convicts, must know that prison is a major deprivation, inconceivable as an alternative to life outside.

We need a simultaneous development: radically shortened sentences and elimination of all amenities. No factories or jobs, thereby cutting off the source of weapons. No commissary: no cigarettes, coffee, or candy bars. This would eliminate gambling, loan sharking, the trappings of success. No personal radios or televisions. No phone calls, unless the phone call is substituted for a visit. Curtailed correspondence and one visit a month.

In this prison convicts would be given coveralls, underwear, socks, and tennis shoes. They would have a flexible toothbrush so it couldn't be sharpened into a weapon, a flexible comb, liquid soap, a towel, and toilet paper. They would be allowed one



"In prisons as they are now, the guards are at the mercy of the inmates. In the proposed prison, the guards would know they had total control."

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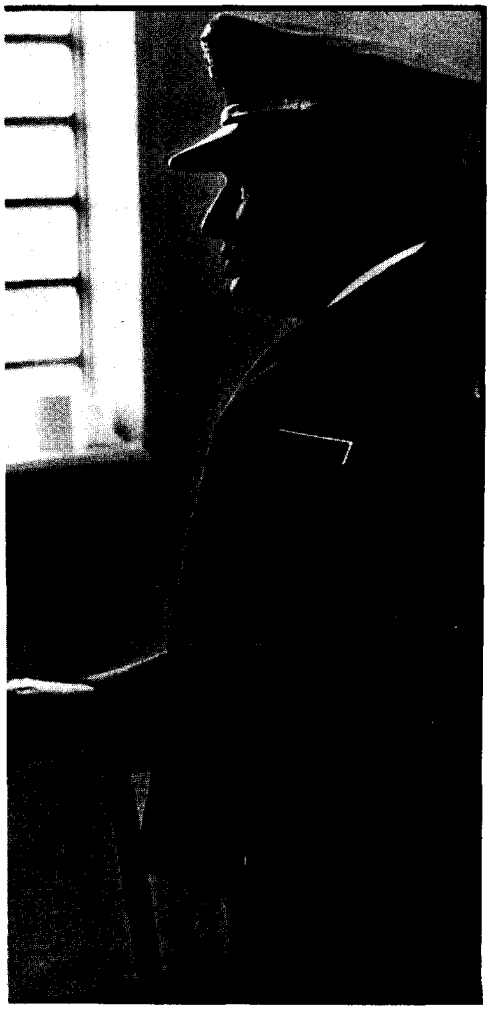
library book in their cells. No personal property whatever, which alone would eliminate half the violence in prison. No one could smoke, which would eliminate fires and reduce lung cancer. Prisoners would spend more time in their cells, as convicts in solitary do now. Convicts hate solitary; it's boring.

At the end of six months, prisoners could enroll in the prison school, which would get them out of their cells four hours a day. They wouldn't have to enroll in school, but given the alternative, most probably would.

Failure to apply themselves in school or disruptive behavior would be grounds for revoking the privilege. Those who didn't go to school would be housed separately to prevent them from harassing or intimidating those who did.

Every moment that a man was out of his cell, he would be under the direct scrutiny of guards. No rapes. No homosexuality. No maneuvering.

ETHAN HOFFMAN / ARCHIVE



There would be less guard-on-inmate brutality. Such brutality often springs from fear. In prisons as they are now, the guards are at the mercy of the inmates. In the proposed prison, the guards would know they had total control. A law would mandate imprisonment for any guard who assaults an inmate, except in self-defense. A second law would mandate imprisonment for any prison employee who conceals knowledge of such an assault. Such prisons would have to be of manageable size.

A year in such a prison would be like three years in a current prison. Five years would be hard to take. Ten years would be almost too much.

The cost factor of such a prison would be higher, because all the food service, school, and hospital employees would be civilians instead of convicts. On the other hand, there would be far fewer people in these prisons, and for shorter periods of time.

The only people who would need to go to prison would be violent, dangerous offenders: killers, rapists, kidnappers, armed robbers. Fifty-three percent of the people now in prison are convicted of non-violent offenses: forgery, embezzlement, non-sufficient funds checks, gambling, prostitution, petty theft, shoplifting, bribery, confidence games, pickpocketing, fraud, pornography, drug use, burglary, car theft, and sex acts between consenting adults.

As a nation we can't afford to send these people to the penitentiary. When a man steals $100 and spends two years in prison—at a cost of thousands of dollars a year—we are committing fiscal folly. The only non-violent crimes that merit a prison term are those in the category of "criminal enterprise": professional forgery rings, burglary rings, fencing operations, and drug rings.

The rest of these people should be treated as misdemeanants, facing a term in a rigorous local jail. Under this kind of setup, it would be necessary for the rural counties to build regional jails, so that no one county would have to maintain such an expensive institution. It might be necessary for the state to bear part of the cost.

What are the logistics of turning the system we now have into the envisioned one? It's easier than you might think. The governor has the power of clemency. He can decree that all people with no violent crimes on their records are to have their sentences reduced to two years, and that all those with two years are to be given 120 days good time. That would open up an enormous amount of prison space in a relatively short time.

The second step is to devise a sentencing structure for all new convicts. An essential ingredient is fairness. The same crime should carry the same penalty for the rich and the poor, black and white, the educated and the ignorant.

Contemporary theory, however, is going in the other direction. The way we do it now, a mildly retarded defendant from a poor family, with little education, is punished much more harshly than an honor student from a good family. The honor student is seen as a potential asset to society, the other defendant as more likely to be a lifelong liability.

Most courts now use "pre-sentence evaluations." When sentencing, they consider the defendant's familial stability, his education, his prior record, his marital status, etc. If the defendant has a good profile, the recommendation may be that he not go to prison at all. The poor defendant I described probably would receive a much longer sentence. A kid from a white-collar family probably would be granted probation the first time around, even for armed robbery. Many people steal knowing they have one free slide coming. By punishing the crime rather than the individual, the courts could eliminate such thinking. It is common in every prison for one man to be serving two years for a crime, and another to be serving twenty years for a similar crime. That is a great source of bitterness. Judicial discretion breeds judicial abuse.

Most importantly, once the prisoner had served his time and completed parole, he should be done with it forever. All rights as a citizen should be restored to him. Five years after completion of parole, his criminal record should be expunged.

The current system is obviously not working. It's time to try something radically new. ■

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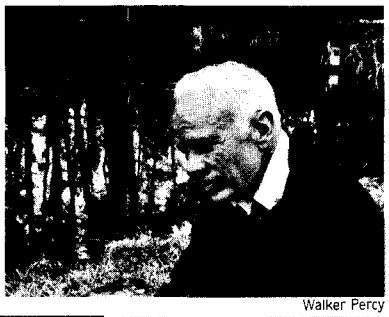
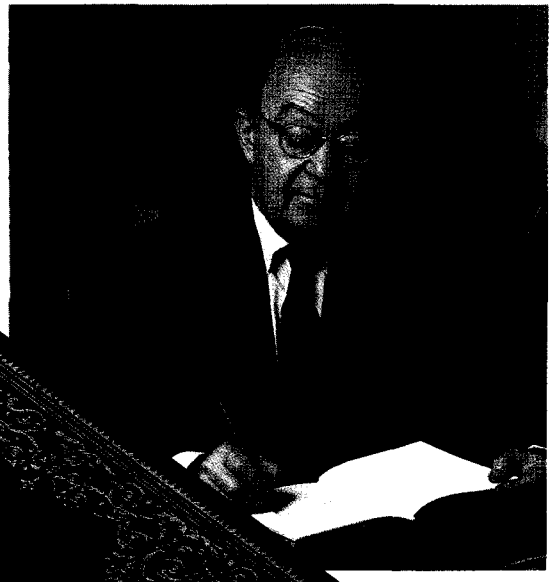


Walker Percy

PHOTO CREDITS: Kurt Vonnegut Jr. by Jill Krementz.

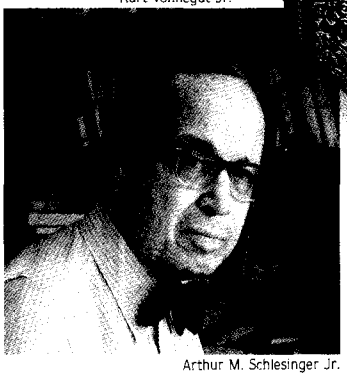
Gore Vidal



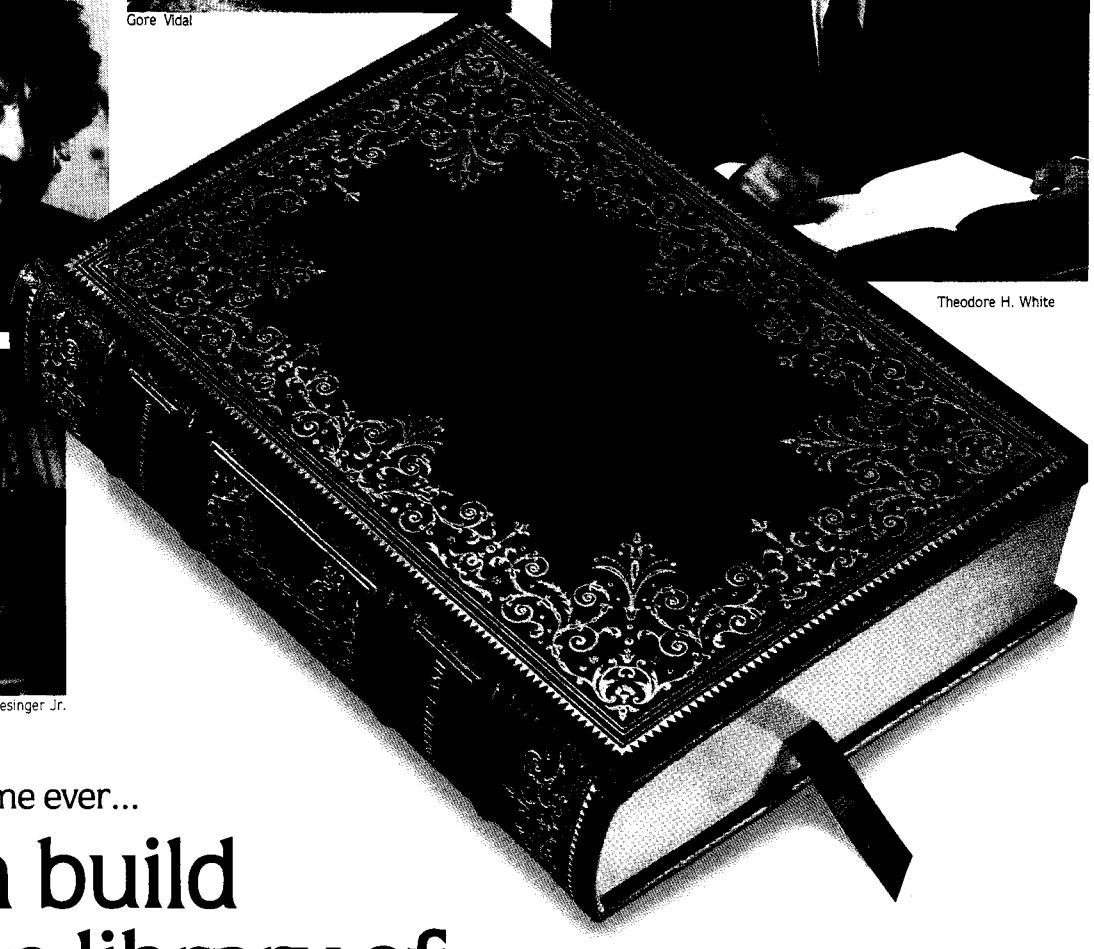
Theodore H. White

William Styron

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.



Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.



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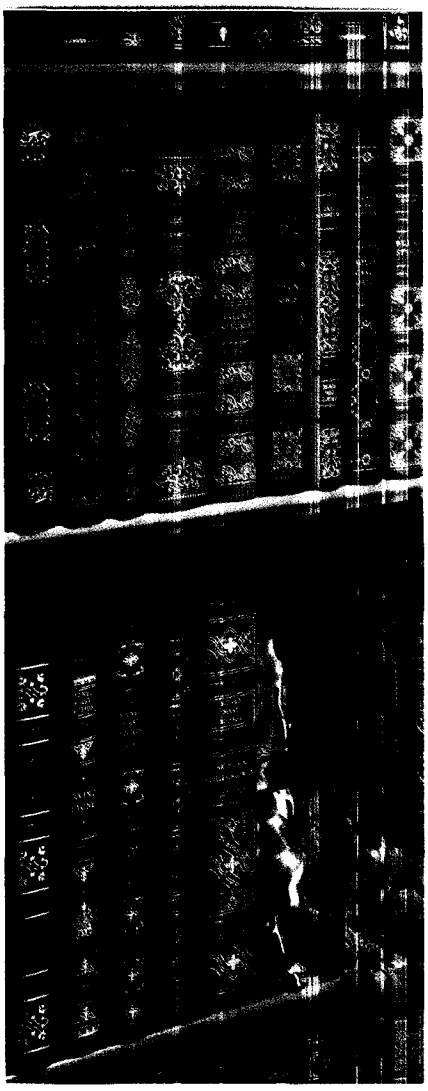

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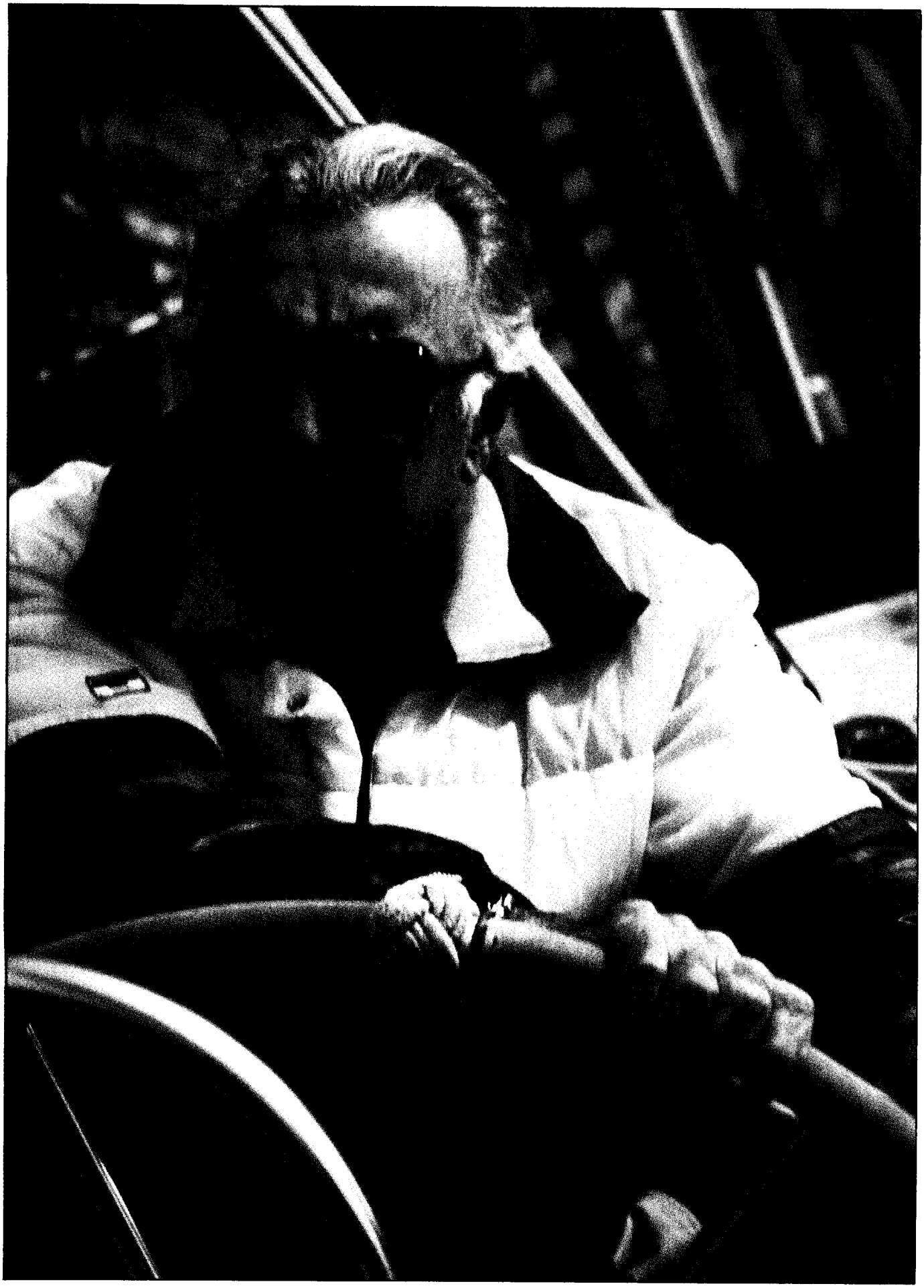

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Walter Cronkite: Making Waves

With a just-released record album on the Sixties and a new book, the man who for decades brought us the "CBS Evening News" is sailing into new waters.

BY LINDA SANDERS

As we pulled up in front of Walter Cronkite's home on Martha's Vineyard one recent Saturday morning, he hurried out to meet us.

"I tried to reach you last night," he said, the profoundly familiar voice betraying the slightest touch of agitation. "Can we possibly reschedule for later? You see, there's a helicopter waiting for me. . . an emergency. . . personal."

Helicopter? Emergency? Thoughts raced. An accident in the family? A summons from Washington? A global catastrophe?

"I've got the chance to see the final race for the America's Cup at Newport this afternoon. . . . It's historic, you know."

There could be no doubt that for Cronkite, whose passion is sailing, this was a matter of real consequence. His first book on the subject, South by Southeast, *is being published this month. It is a brief memoir of sailing America's Atlantic waterway, illustrated with paintings by Ray Ellis.*

The race for the America's Cup didn't come off that day, but the interview did the next morning. We were there to talk about a boxed set of recordings being released by CBS Records this month called I Can Hear It Now—The Sixties, *an aural survey of the decade narrated by Cronkite. He recorded the volume back in the early 1970s. But, he says, because it had little promotion, or because few people were eager to survey the often ghastly events of a decade that in many respects hadn't yet ended, the recordings made little impact. Now, he hopes, things have changed.*

It is an absorbing document. Opening with a John Updike epithet, the volume chronicles this "slum of a decade" through the speeches, news broadcasts and recorded ambient sound of the times. From the Tonkin Gulf to the Sea of Tranquility and the Bay of Pigs to Yasgur's Farm, virtually every significant event of the Sixties is presented, without the riddle of platitudes the subject so often inspires. Cronkite hopes the recordings will prove to be less an agent for nostalgia than a spur to historic evaluation and a revival of interest in the unresolved issues of the not-so-distant past.

SR *How great a role did television play in the Sixties in shaping people's response to the Vietnam War, the anti-war demonstrations, the riots in the inner cities, the assassinations? Do you think that having these events brought so literally into people's homes had a significant effect on the course of history?*

CRONKITE It did play a role, a major role. Certainly watching American forces at war in Vietnam and watching them die, almost live on the screen, within hours of the event had a very sobering effect on the American people. It shook the nation in a fashion that I don't think anything else could have, raising the question of whether war is a viable way of pursuing politics any longer. That had to have a major effect on decision-making in Washington.

But I think it is bad to jump to the conclusion that if television weren't there, things would be different. They would be somewhat different, no doubt about that. But that they would be better, for instance, is highly speculative and hardly provable at all. If television is to be blamed for any preconditioning for these events, it should be blamed for failures to have thoroughly covered the problems before they erupted into violence. I think that is the failure of television then and today.

SR *But in a more positive vein, didn't television help raise the level of Americans' political involvement?*

CRONKITE I don't doubt at all that television had that effect. And I do think it was a positive reaction. What was not positive was that people learned that to get attention they had to throw a brick through a window. But it also taught a lot of people in varied walks of life that there were leaders out there whom they could follow in their protests; that they were not alone; that in organization there was strength. And I think that's a good thing.

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SR *Would you say that the leaders of this country today are more remote, less able to rally profound political interest than leaders in the Sixties? Or is this just nostalgia?*

CRONKITE I think it's several things. This is an area where television has probably had some influence, because part of the problem in this matter of perception of leadership is the daily exposure that leaders are getting on television. They almost become family members. You see them with all their warts, with their hair in curlers. And that has undoubtedly contributed to a diminution of their impact. Churchill could be dull. Roosevelt could be dull. De Gaulle, for goodness' sake, could be *very* dull. But you know their moments were the superb stuff of history.

Also, during the Sixties we were living with crises. We were constantly exposed, it seemed, to uncertainties and danger. That had to bring us closer to our leaders. We haven't had that today. The problems are immense today, and the decisions are critical to our future, the major areas of concern being atomic proliferation, pollution, depletion of natural resources, overpopulation. These are critical matters. But they are not concentrated, yet, into an imminent danger that the public is aware of, to the degree that we are living with our leaders' decision-making process. And since that is not the case, the leaders seem more remote.

SR *What about the so-called Sixties Generation? As someone who watched those people come of age, so to speak, what is your impression of them, then and now?*

CRONKITE The Sixties Generation, in my mind, is the young people who had learned falsely, in many cases, to expect a progression through life that included an education, a good job, a house, a car, a family, and eventual retirement.

Suddenly they saw the whole world turned topsy-turvy: they saw that our institutions are fragile, that our security is not 100 percent, that our very existence could be snuffed out by the fact that the leaders we were once led to believe were trustworthy people in the bland history books were, while maybe trustworthy, still inadequate to handle the great problems of our day. And this breakdown of the concept of leadership and authority led to the turned-off generation of the Sixties. It went into the Seventies, of course, and we're just beginning to recover now, I think, from that. It led to a rejection of the democratic processes—a very, very serious blow to stabile continuity. They are a lost generation, in that fashion. We lost a lot of potential leaders who will never come back.

SR *It's interesting that you stress the "drop-out" aspect of the generation. I think when the people of the Sixties Generation look at themselves, they tend to think of the '60s as a time of an enormous infusion of power, of fighting for what was difficult and right, of intense political involvement. Some major things were accomplished, but many were not. And then the defeatism and apathy set in.*

CRONKITE I think we're both right—pessimistic and optimistic views of the same set of events. It was the net effect I was more impressed with than the momentary organizational effects that took place.

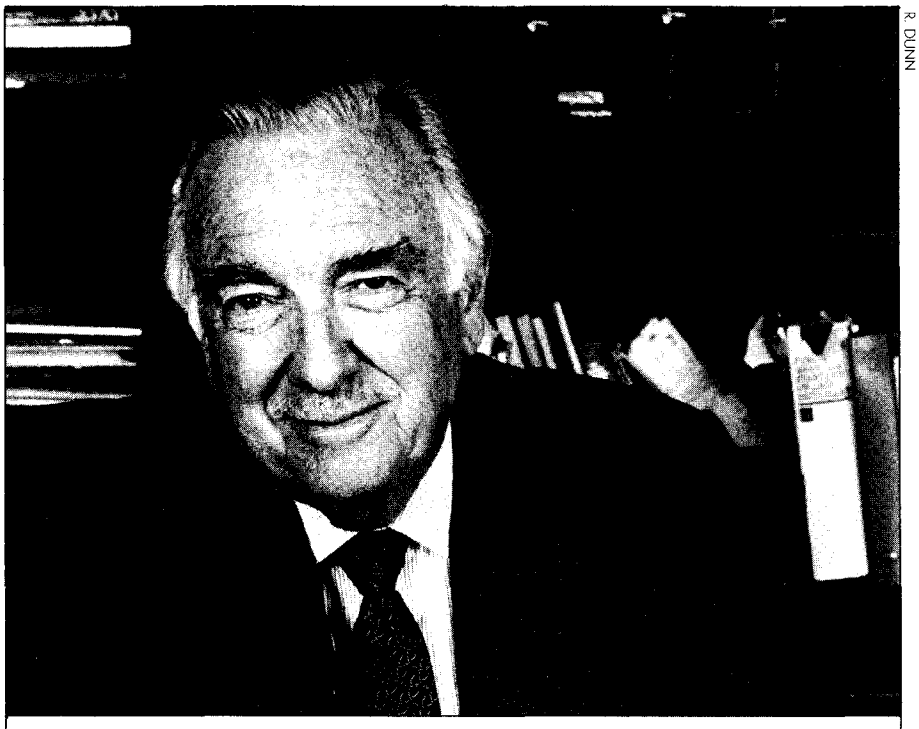
I so abhore violence in any form. I'm not a hunting man or even a fishing man. There's a touch of violence to it. Where human affairs are concerned, I just cannot believe that man cannot sit down and solve problems without resorting to force, even the force of demonstrations.

I certainly defend the constitutional right to organize, to demonstrate, but it seems to me it should be possible for our political leaders to understand the depth of people's feelings without their having to demonstrate.

SR *How can their feelings be made known, in your view?*

CRONKITE They can speak, they can meet. As a matter of fact, they can parade. I think the civil rights campaign as conducted by King and the others was very well-done. It was not those leaders who permitted it to get out of control.

People really don't understand, I don't think, their importance as individuals to their representatives in Washington. And this is one of the failures of the communication media, to keep them apprised of that fact and show that their vote, their letters, make a difference. You see, I don't think that television does nearly a good enough job of covering the workings of Congress. It moves in at the last stage when the battle has already been decided. Attention ought to be given when the bill is introduced in the hopper of one or the other houses. When it starts its process through subcommittee hearings, that's when the lobbyists move in, that's when the PACs move in, because they know that's the real point where decisions are made. But



R. DUNN

Walter Cronkite: "It's pretty hard to make it today with straight hair."

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we don't cover that, not on television. The newspapers do it to a certain extent, but they're not doing an adequate job, either.

We've got facilities we never dreamed of a few years ago to reach the people, and yet there is not evidence to me that we are using the facilities properly. I am very much worried about the future of democracy with the inadequacy of communication today.

SR *Whose responsibility is it to change the situation?*

> *"A lot of the motivation of those in communication schools is the motivation that once sent people into drama school, not . . . to journalism school."*

CRONKITE It's the media's responsibility. I think in this respect the media should be leaders and should accept some suffering in financial gain in favor of public responsibility. It's the only way we're going to do it.

SR *But in which direction is television news actually moving? Not just the network news but the local stations, the affiliates, with the interminable celebrity features and giggling camaraderie? Isn't that the way many young reporters come up, as potential network anchormen and women?*

CRONKITE Yes, but most of them don't come up. I mean, they come up in the sense that they're given better and better jobs, but they don't learn very much about news coverage.

SR *If you were just starting out today, would you make it in television with your journalistic values?*

CRONKITE No, probably not. I don't think I'm pretty enough, for one thing. I don't fit the mold. It's pretty hard to make it today with straight hair.

I want to qualify what I have to say about all this with the fact that there are exceptions, of course. There are some very good young people, dedicated journalists, who are really learning journalism. But they are a minority.

What is happening today is that there really is not an adequate training ground for broadcasting, as I believe newspapers and press services once were. And I think a lot of the motivation of those in communication schools is the motivation that once sent people into drama school, not the motivation that once sent them to journalism school. I have the feeling they're there to take Makeup I and II and Trench Coat I and II. They're not there to take History and Perspectives of History and courses that give them a real feel for the world that they're about to report. We have created a generation of people whose values are those of broadcast journalism, the quick stand-up, the quick forty seconds, the quick minute-and-a-half.

Of course, there's a place for the other journalists in documentary presentation—investigative journalism, which in many cases is carried on quite well. In too many cases, though, it's more of a show business gimmick than it is a genuine investigatory effort. It makes for high drama to corner the culprit and see him bleed on the air. That's highly effective television. But does it cast much light? Sometimes it does; many times it doesn't.

SR *A personal question. Is there, or has there ever been, a dilemma between your objectivity as a reporter and the free expression of the strong opinions you obviously hold?*

CRONKITE Yes, there's a dilemma, or there *should* be a dilemma, let me put it that way. I resolved it a long time ago. I never wanted to be a pundit. I've done some commentary, but I never assigned that role to myself, and consequently, I've never chafed under the restrictions that imposes.

SR *Yet the magnitude of your experience makes it natural for people to invest you with a great deal of wisdom.*

CRONKITE Well, yes, people have a thirst to know what Walter Cronkite thinks. I've also been asked to run for office many, many times by various delegations, and I'm always appalled—I've never been disappointed in this cynical observation—that they never ask me, they've *never* asked me what I stand for. They feel that my popularity and people's perception of me would get me elected. They're wrong.

I have very strong views on some of the major controversies of our times, and when I get out on the lecture platform, I let 'em have it in many cases. Once I went out on the campaign trail, my popularity would slough off by droves with every issue.

SR *One final question. Does your passion for sailing have anything to do with the 1972 survey that resulted in your canonization as "the most trusted man in America"? I would think operating under that kind of pressure would make Bora-Bora look particularly inviting.*

CRONKITE Well, you know, I can't associate with a survey that shows, quote, the most trusted man in America, unquote—a poll, incidentally, in which I maintain they never telephoned my wife. I don't associate sailing with that, of course. But it's definitely an escape mechanism, no question about it. There's just no sense in checking with the office when you're 120 miles offshore.

I am just very much involved and taken with the waterfront, the water. That's what *South by Southeast* is all about. I don't consider it by any means an important book. It's a coffeetable book, a divertissement—a little history, personal experience, a little boating experience, some observations of people and their way of life. But I do think it says something about the fact that we are people who were founded on the seashore. We came up out of the sea just as much as the amphibians did to create us in the first place, and I think it's important to remember that. Sailing really satisfies the Romantic in my nature. I live a very Walter Mitty existence behind the wheel of a boat. Practically every time I lift the anchor, I'm saying to myself, "All right, captain, we've got the tea stowed for Southampton. Let's beat the Ranger!"

I have to be on a body of water where I know I could sail to Portugal if I wanted to just take off. I probably will never sail to Portugal, but I've got to know that I could. ■

Linda Sanders is an **SR** contributing editor.

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Waiting in the Wings

The trend on Broadway toward lucrative musical revivals has threatened the creation of new American musicals, but off-Broadway theaters may be changing all that.

BY LAURIE WINER

At *Forbidden Broadway,* a popular New York revue that satirizes the last few Broadway seasons, audiences are laughing at a number called *It's Almost Like 1948.* For a theatergoer who attends Broadway musicals, it is, in fact, almost like 1948, 1951, 1954, and at least a dozen other vintage years for the musical.

Revivals are flooding the New York stage. Since 1980 alone, Broadway audiences have seen *Porgy and Bess* (1935), *Show Boat* (1927), *On Your Toes* (1936), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *The King and I* (1951), *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), *Camelot* (1960), *Little Me* (1962), *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God* (1976), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Brigadoon* (1947), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *Five O'Clock Girl* (1927), *Can-Can* (1953), *Peter Pan* (1954), *The Music Man* (1957), *Little Johnny Jones* (1904), *The Most Happy Fella* (1956), *West Side Story* (1957), *Mame* (1966), an updated version of *Funny Face* (1927), and numerous revues featuring the songs of other eras.

It's enough to make a theatergoer feel himself in a time warp, except for one crucial thing: audiences in 1948 did not see revivals. As recently as the 1970-71 season, they saw only one revival on Broadway, a hit production of *No, No, Nanette* (1925). The current revival trend took root in the mid-1970s and was sent spiraling by the financial devastation of the 1978-79 season. Despite the opening of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*—arguably the last great Broadway musical, with a score as magnificent as its production—1979 was a dreadful year, with new Broadway and Broadway-bound musicals losing $13 million. The casualties included: *I Remember Mama, King of Hearts, Platinum, A Broadway Musical, Oh, Kay!, The Grand Tour, The Utter Glory of Morrissey Hall, Carmelina,* and *Ballroom.* The next season four musical revivals appeared on Broadway stages; the next season, seven; the next, six; and the last season saw eight revivals on Broadway. Clearly, producers are not lining up to risk money on unknown composers, with the exception of those working with superstar directors, as Harry Krieger worked with Michael Bennett on *Dreamgirls* and Maury Yeston with Tommy Tune on *Nine.*

Professional theater-watchers began complaining in 1980. Martin Gottfried wrote in *Cue,* "There are troubling aspects to the revival trend. This is a conservative, low-risk show business that has taken over, with more business to it than show." In 1981 Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times,* "However slickly done, revivals and revues aren't going to last us forever. Already we're scraping the bottom of the barrel." *New York Post* critic Clive Barnes, usually generous to musicals, wrote in 1983, "Almost anything would be better than this present travesty of a glorious past." And John Rockwell, in an essay on Sondheim from his book, *All American Music,* proclaimed, "The financing of any Broadway show, especially a musical, has grown so perilous as to discourage artistic innovation."

Lest anyone have missed the point, the 1983 Tony Award nominations were an unpleasant reminder that the Broadway musical has yet to pull itself out of a stultifying slump. The nominees: *Cats,* the winner, a British import that, for all of its $5 million in costs, could not procure a plot; *Blues in the Night,* a revue of old torch songs that was closed and forgotten by Tony night; *My One and Only,* scored by George Gershwin; and *Merlin,* the Doug Henning vehicle that resembles the great Broadway musical about as well as the Italian pavilion at EPCOT Center resembles Rome.

At the time producers started turning back the clock, searching the past for the musical that might be gussied up into a once-again hit, several New York institutions strove to look forward, perhaps in anticipation of last season's musical drought. Since 1979, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), the Dramatists Guild, and New York University have set up workshops (or graduate programs, in the case of NYU) in which composers and lyricists can hone skills without the pressure of openings and reviews but with the advice and guidance of well-

Brad Morantz and Faith Prince in *Little Shop of Horrors:* **The audience keeps wondering "who's going to get eaten next?"**

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known songwriters. Meanwhile, off-Broadway, which in the past has initiated such major musicals as Joseph Papp's *A Chorus Line,* continued to seek out new talent, risking money and reputation with a vigor noticeably lacking on New York's larger stages. Consequently, some of the freshest and most popular new musicals of the last few years were born off-Broadway.

In 1979 musical theater program director Ira Weitzman set about looking for an appropriate first musical for Playwrights Horizons, a non-profit house that based its reputation upon ushering innovative new work into the American theater. Weitzman found what he was looking for at a reception in an Upper West Side apartment, where a young unknown composer-lyricist named William Finn played songs from a work in progress called *In Trousers,* the story of a character named Marvin.

"There was almost nothing going on on Broadway," recalls Weitzman, "and there were virtually no outlets for new musicals. We were all getting used to a rather bland familiarity. I heard Bill's work, and it was so new; it had guts and intelligence. At that time it was unformed but filled with emotion. I just said, 'Who is this guy Marvin?' "

Playwrights Horizons produced *In Trousers* to moderate success, but Weitzman's gambit payed off in a big way two years later when Finn wrote the remarkable *March of the Falsettos,* a continuation of the Marvin story. When Frank Rich came to see it in April 1981, he wrote, "I can't even remember the last time I attended a musical—on Broadway or off—that introduced a new composer or lyricist of serious promise. And that's why I had trouble believing my ears at a new show with the unlikely title of *March of the Falsettos.*" *Time* magazine called Finn "the stepchild of Stephen Sondheim," while the *New York Daily News* posed the question, "William Finn: The Next Sondheim?" And almost overnight, Finn became the new hope for the Broadway musical.

Not a word of spoken dialogue can be heard in *March,* yet both Finn and Weitzman refer to it as a "book musical." They mean, essentially,

The mere fact that Sondheim chose to work at Playwrights imbues off-Broadway with a legitimacy and importance never before attained in its long history.

that *March* is a play (in a way that *Cats* is not) with full-blooded characters, character development, and some plot. Finn will tell you "an enormous amount" happens, but the bare-bones narrative is summed up by Marvin in two identical musical phrases, one early in the play and the other later. Marvin sings:

> Well the situation's this
> It's not tough to comprehend.
> I divorced my wife,
> I left my child and I ran off with a friend. *

And later:

> Well the situation's this
> I could use a little drink.
> I divorced my wife,
> She dried her eyes,
> Then she ran off with my shrink.*

The "enormous amount" that happens in *March* takes place in the emotional arena. Finn examines his characters microscopically and turns the ordinary feelings of bright but ordinary people into cataclysmic confessions of basic fears and needs. His lyrics are both organically simple and loaded with ambiguity, similar to but more sophisticated than Oscar Hammerstein's "Don't throw bouquets at me." But Finn's characters are stripped naked in a way that seems to owe more to Chekhov than to musical comedy. His men exhibit, as all truly naked characters are wont to do, the severest selfishness. In a moment of irritation, Marvin says to his lover:

> Hate me or need me,
> Just make sure you feed me. *

Marvin sings with Mendel, his soon-to-be-wed psychiatrist:

> We're needy and wanting
> We're greedy as swine.
> (Mendel:) I just bought a family.
> (Marvin:) The family was mine. *

On it goes, through some exceedingly witty passages, until there comes an emotional sorting out, with each character caught in one of the inescapable truths of his life. Mendel sings to his bride, Marvin's ex-wife:

> I love you more than I meant to.
> In my profession, one's love stays unexpressed.
> Here we stand;
> Take my hand.
> God, I'm distressed.
> How I love you. *

In the middle of the carnage stands Marvin, who finds himself uncomfortably alone. And in the great modern tradition of profound ambiguity, Marvin is unable to express the tumult and confusion in his heart, except to say:

> I never wanted
> I wanted
> I never never never never never
> Never wanted to love you. *

March ran for nine months, a decent though not extraordinary time, and its impact was undeniable. (Jerry Herman's *La Cage aux Folles,* which looks to be this season's biggest hit, is the first Broadway musical to center on a homosexual love affair. Although Finn did not get there first, his *March of the Falsettos,* along with Harvey Fierstein's acclaimed non-musical, *Torch Song Trilogy,* cleared the path for *La Cage*'s subject to be unquestionably legit on Broadway.)

The following year, 1982, the tiny, non-profit WPA Theatre launched what was to become an enormous success for composer Alan Menken and lyricist-writer-director Howard Ashman. *Little Shop of Horrors,* a high-spirited and clever takeoff on the 1960 Roger Corman movie, was a hit even before it opened. While still in rehearsal, the creators previewed some of the songs in the annual Broadcast Music Inc. (BMI) Musical Theater Workshop Showcase, a yearly event attended by most major producers, and immediately the phones started ringing. "When we opened, we had every producer imaginable

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waiting in line to get in," Menken recalls.

The Shubert Organization, along with David Geffen, Cameron Mackintosh, and the WPA, moved *Little Shop* to the Orpheum Theater, where today it shows no sign of faltering. It is the mighty Shubert's first off-Broadway venture. When David Geffen took Steven Spielberg to see it, they decided to produce a film version together, with Geffen as producer, Spielberg as executive producer, and Martin Scorsese as director.

Little Shop is a classic Faustian tale. A poor nebbish named Seymour discovers that by feeding a strange-looking plant human blood, he will find fortune and love; that is, until his crimes catch up with him. The authors have combined parody with a sweet warmth for their only partially cartoonish characters. When the love interest blossoms in the second act, the audience laughs at the refrain—"Suddenly, Seymour is standing beside you"—but it is finally moved by what turns out to be a genuine love song. Menken's music, a pastiche of early 1960s rock, captures the freshness of the era it parodies.

The audience is kept on its toes by Ashman's lyrics, which are loaded with unexpected puns and deadpan whackiness. In a number called "Downtown," which sets up what each character has at stake, Seymour sings:

> Poor! All my life I've always been poor.
> I keep asking God what I'm for.
> And he tells me, "Gee, I'm not sure." **

Before Seymour discovers the plant's secret fertilizer, he laments its refusal to grow:

> I've given you sunshine
> I've given you dirt
> You've given me nothing
> But heartache and hurt. . . .
> Oh God, how I mist you
> Oh pod, how you tease
> Now please—grow for me. **

Ashman and Menken have written a traditional book musical with a vibrant, modern sensibility that draws all sorts of audiences to a slightly seedy area of downtown. If it is possible to explain popular acceptance, Ashman comes close. "We're a pop show, an audience musical," he says. "People aren't writing book shows anymore. I happen to love narratives. I love those plot elements that keep an audience asking, 'Who's going to get eaten next? What's going to happen next?' A show must be emotionally accessible, so it must have an underlying morality, one that reaffirms humanity. That will never go out of date."

That brings us up to last season. While it was the year of *Merlin* on Broadway, 1983 proved a pretty good year off-Broadway, where at least three musical events indicated that the drought may be ending soon. Martin Charnin opened *Upstairs at O'Neals,* a Julius Monk-style cabaret revue with some smashing new material. Not coincidentally, most of the composers-lyricists are connected with either the BMI Musical Theater Workshop, the Dramatists Guild Musical Theater Workshop, the ASCAP Musical Theater Workshop, or the NYU Musical Theater Program.

The reviews for *Upstairs* were excellent, and an album was recorded. As the critics noted, several impressive songwriting debuts were made at *Upstairs.* Two of the Charnin finds—Douglas Bernstein and Denis Markell—will unveil a new musical in December at the Manhattan Theater Club.

Over at Playwrights Horizons, *Herringbone* was born, and so were the careers of lyricist Ellen Fitzhugh, composer Skip Kennon and book writer Tom Cone. David Rounds starred in this strange, brash, one-man musical, ostensibly about a boy whose body is inhabited by the spirit of a dead midget vaudeville star. The story around Playwrights goes that Sondheim, upon hearing Fitzhugh's lyrics, was so impressed that he called Harold Prince and told him to come right down. As a result, Prince will direct a new show by Fitzhugh and composer Larry Grossman. *A Century of Progress* should arrive on Broadway next fall.

Two of last season's best songs were heard by no more than 4,500 people at a workshop production, also at Playwrights Horizons. *America Kicks Up Its Heels* was apparently marred by problems, the nature of which we can only guess, because the press was not admitted. But *America*'s score, by William Finn, contains some of the composer's finest work. Two songs in particular are already legendary in the rarefied world of theater insiders. The songs, "All Fall Down" and "A Better World," are brilliant examples of Finn's forte: an unlikely mixture of exuberance, melancholy, and a driving, obsessive anger. These songs will stay unknown only as long as they remain unheard.

The hardest show to get into last season was not *Cats* but a three-week run of *Sunday in the Park with George,* words and music by Sondheim, again at Playwrights Horizons. We will see a regular run of that show sometime late this season, but the mere fact that Sondheim chose to work at Playwrights imbues off-Broadway with a legitimacy and importance never before attained in its long history.

Upcoming musicals from our cast of characters include a refined *America Kicks Up Its Heels,* sometime next year. (Finn is also at work on a musical about Siamese twins, and he would like to combine *In Trousers* and *March of the Falsettos* for Broadway.) Also, Skip Kennon's *Blanco,* with lyricist Michael Korie; an Alan Menken-Tom Eyen merger; and a musical about Pope Joan as a young girl, "a 9-year-old who is smarter that everyone else around her," to be penned by Howard Ashman and Maury Yeston.

The signs are clear. Off-Broadway will continue to initiate more and more new material for the musical theater in the next few years. Yet the economics are just as clear. Off-Broadway, with its small and smaller houses, pulls in profits only at a trickle. It took *Little Shop of Horrors* more than a year to break even. And most composers want to write for Broadway; that's still where the money, glory, and satisfaction are. So it's inevitable that all the innovation going on downtown and west of Eighth Avenue will find its way to Broadway. With any luck, a new age of musicals, or at least an age of new musicals, is just around the corner. ■

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Laurie Winer is a free-lance writer living in New York City.

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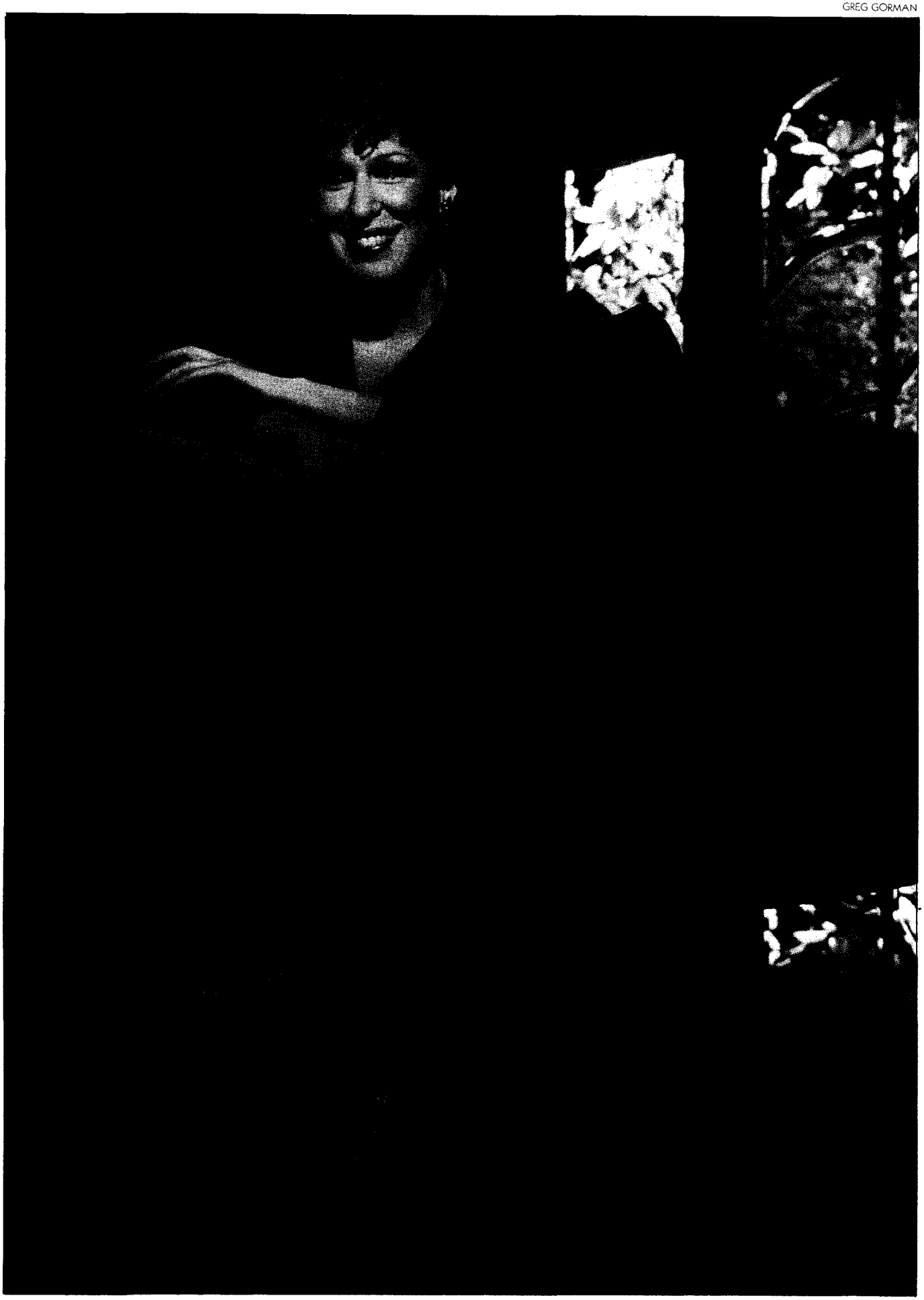

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This May Be the Best Bette Yet

The success of Bette Midler's second book is a surprise to her, but she has no intention of becoming a full-time writer. In fact, the "Divine Miss M" may turn to comedy to slow her pace and rest her voice.

BY RICHARD LAERMER

Bette Midler is touting a new image. The outrageous singer who once titled her persona the "Divine Miss M" says, "I no longer consider myself a broad. I've outgrown that." Now "a tasteful entertainer," she wants to set the record straight.

Her past accomplishments consist of nine musically diverse albums, three movies, two books, and a handful of concert tours notorious for their gimmickry: whether garbed as a hot dog or a female King Kong, Midler knows how to please a crowd. The public's conception of her, through interviews and performances, is one of a rowdy, raucous woman of leisure who knows how to handle anyone or anything. But that is not the case today.

The new Midler wants to take it easy. Riding high from the overwhelming success of her second book (*The Saga of Baby Divine,* Crown), Midler hopes people see her in a new light. "I'm really proud of this book," she says in the midst of a New York promotional outing. "And I think people will get something out of it." But don't get her wrong; Midler hasn't settled down to the notion of full-time writing. "I'm an entertainer," she reminds us. "I'm not just a writer or a singer. And besides, I only write to amuse myself. I am not devoured by the need to write."

Midler began *Baby Divine,* the poetic tale of a Midler-like toddler, on a dare. While she was promoting her first book, the travelogue *A View from A Broad,* someone asked her if she would write again.

"I figured, why not? I couldn't see any reason to say no." She told the inquisitor, "Yes, I am going to write a children's book next." That information was scoffed at by most people, who thought she knew nothing about children or their books. "But I began to think about the fairy tales that enchanted me when I was a child, and I remembered how romantic and colorful they were," Midler says, grinning. "I didn't think there were books like that anymore, so I decided to do one.

"For many years I have been portraying the Divine Miss M, and she never had a history. If that character were truly divine, I thought, then she must've been born on a splendid night. I decided to play with that notion."

The Skies were ablaze with Disorder that Night,
The Planets, aghast and aquiver;
The Delirious Moon had the Brass to be Full
When it should have been only a sliver.

On that starry night, Baby Divine came to be, born to proper parents who didn't understand her. At one point in the fable, Baby's mom and dad question whether the tyke is really theirs. "The parents are made to seem villainous," Midler says, "because I wanted Baby Divine to be a real hero." However, the little hero is preparing for a life as a show-biz legend, as evidenced by Baby Divine's entrance into the world—"She'd arrived with High Heels on her feet and a Sprig of Red Hair on her head"—and her parents go into shock.

The scene in which the Divines question their daughter's parentage is "very real" to Midler. "Many kids hear that from their parents. Imagine how traumatic that must be," she says with a sigh. But when Baby Divine takes the hint and leaves home, she finds a world laced with many bad things. To ease the pain, Midler introduces a friendly bird who, in pure fantasy style, takes Baby for a ride. Through Todd Schorr's magical illustrations, the reader takes flight as the child soars over highways and houses and trees. And soon Baby Divine beholds her first revelation: everything that had seemed so big is now terribly small. What had seemed largely important close-up is now trivial; it makes her happy.

All of these disclosures, which Midler calls great truths, come from the colorfully creative mind of the Divine herself, who earnestly wants to teach both children and larger folks a few of the meanings of life.

"Baby Divine," Midler proudly ac-

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knowledges, "is an outsider. That's probably going to color her whole life; it certainly did mine." So in reality the tot is a small version of Midler, with the fictitious twist being the child's education, one Midler wishes she could have received.

"I didn't belong as a kid, and that always bothered me. If only I'd known that one day my differentness would be an asset, then my early life would have been much easier." She hopes that kids who read *The Saga of Baby Divine* will see that it's okay to be original; that somehow their eccentricities will pay off. They certainly did in Midler's case.

Cherish Forever What Makes You Unique
Cause You're Really a Yawn If It Goes!

In *The Saga of Baby Divine,* the three most memorable characters—Midler's female equivalents to the Three Wise Men—are a former dancer, a former singer, and a former joke-teller. When Baby Divine arrives on the scene, these three hurry to instruct her in the show business arts.

"Any true show business legend has to be able to sing, dance, and tell jokes," Midler informs. So the girls show Baby the ropes. Because the child is expected to grow into a marvel, the author had it in mind to tell the tale with all the wonder of Christmas. According to Midler, "That little girl is an angel, and I wrote her birth as an event."

The wise ladies—Lily, Joyce, and Tillie—show Baby Divine what *show* is all about. Lily sings an air, Joyce dresses as a pizza to go, and Tillie does a short tango. The child sees what her life is all about, but before basking in the lights, she has to face a bout with "ugly and heartless Anxiety," who shouts, "You *on the Stage? What astonishing gall! You're a Nothing! A Washout! A Nerd!*"

Baby Divine is caught between her stage desire and mean old Anxiety, but she gathers her wits, laughs him away, and jumps right in: A star is unleashed!

Midler explains, "It would be nice to believe that life really is perfect. Maybe that was part of my hang-up as a child. I believed in the things in fairy tales. I lived in a cloud, and that's probably Baby Divine's fate." Except the baby in Midler's book is heading toward her dream with a gust of encouragement, not the discouragement and mockery Midler experienced as a child.

"I had a pretty peculiar childhood," Midler says. "I was a loud kid. I never got enough attention and would entertain anyone who'd listen. Not that anyone wanted to hear me recite fairy tales, but I did anyway."

Her urgency builds. "Baby Divine has nothing in her vocabulary but the word 'more.' That's the way I was. I think *more* is the cry of the curious person.

"The little girl is a hero because of all she survived in discovering the world. She had trauma, she had pain, and she had some awful things happen to her. That's a hero!"

The character, Baby Divine, came into view for the entertainer during an emotional crisis following the filming of *Jinxed* in 1982. Due to conflicts on the set, Midler suffered a "terrible nervous breakdown" and was sick for three months. She asserts she grew up a lot during her bad time, but there was a spell during which she accomplished no work and stayed in bed for weeks at a time.

"Yeah, there was a long time after *Jinxed* when I couldn't perform. But I did get up on my feet long enough to sit down and start this book." In a fragile state of mind, the author began to create something for children only.

"There's a lot of show business lore in it, which kids may or may not find fun. It isn't preachy," says Midler, but she is sure young people can learn from its pages. "Kids who read this are definitely going to discover a lot of new words, and they might even have a few laughs. But maybe they'll also get comfort in realizing that there is a way to deal with certain kinds of unhappiness."

Midler says many people she meets in the real world worry because they're different, and kids who grow up wondering why they're not like everyone else might need her message: "If you can accept your differentness and learn to love it and encourage it, then you can be someone wonderful."

In a nutshell, that's what Baby Divine learns.

GREG GORMAN

Bette Midler: "I think *more* is the cry of the curious person."

And she thought why if it's such a job for a

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Todd Schorr's cover illustration for Bette Midler's *The Saga of Baby Divine.*

Mountain
To stand out from all of the rest
How hard it must be for a minuscule *Human!*
And suddenly Baby felt blessed!

Midler feels blessed, too. In an interview after recovering from the *Jinxed* experience, Midler said she was "thrilled to death to be me. I know that I'm unique, and that I'm special. I'm my own person, centered in me." Midler has curtailed her self-aggrandizing since those days of glory and has found humility while still maintaining her self-esteem.

"It's best not to be too pompous about yourself," she says. "It's better not to need a limousine for your head. Although people think I'm *just* Divine, I have my share of worries. I worry about growing old and losing my shape, my looks, my hair. As an entertainer, that's my stock and trade. Oh, and I also worry that I don't dance as well as Michael Jackson."

Midler the author doesn't want people calling her "a writer" but is pleased to see people actually buying her latest figment of imagination. Her first literary attempt, a slight seller called *A View from A Broad,* contains tales from her European tour, most of which she fabricated. Today she laughs about the book.

"I wrote that to entertain, and almost everything in the book was made up," she explains. "That's the difference between the two: *Baby Divine* was written with love and heart, and *A View* was put together to show everyone how clever and snide and silly I could be. I lied through my teeth in that book, but wasn't it funny?"

As only a "woman of extreme distaste" can tell it, Midler's pontifications in her first book are those of a near-crazed singer offered the chance to entertain the Continent. Her preparations—choosing a band, practicing routines, praying—are

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followed by a nervous opening in London—"I have one question for Her Maj: What have you got in that handbag?"—and then the tour itself. In an easy-to-believe rendering, Midler leads us through places such as Brighton, Stockholm, Paris, and Antwerp, where we meet her eclectic assortment of characters. Along the way, Midler sideswipes the tour and concocts mini-sagas about the film director who threatens her life—"Only *you* can play the Swedish fish goddess"—the man who rescues her, and her substance intake in Amsterdam—"Everyone kept telling me it would relax me . . . and I was nauseous beyond belief."

A View from A Broad is a burst of entertainment packaged as Midler's scrapbook. It includes photos of Midler and her entourage in various undefined moods and interesting circumstances. The book was a cult hit among her followers.

"I'm amazed at how many people bought the thing," she says, as her eyes light up. "I wrote it on a whim because I thought it would be fun to collect things on tour. When a publisher (Simon & Schuster) went for the idea, it turned into fewer pictures and more text."

In *A View*, Midler characterizes her rambunctious Delores DeLago character as "a woman of tremendous ambition and absolutely no pride at all; a woman of tremendous determination and absolutely no skill; a woman of the grandest notions and not the simplest hint of taste.

"The broad who can take anything in the first book," she says, "is the Divine speaking—it's not me. My story will be a three-hanky book, and no one wants to read that." The Midler smile returns. "I put up a wonderful front in *A View from A Broad* and I'm proud of it. Writers should embroider stories all the time. They should entertain people and make them feel good. To entertain, you have to do a certain amount of acting, on the stage as well as on the page. My first book was a lot of acting."

Midler is about to alter her life plan. Her recent singing tour and album may have been the last of each. While performing in Detroit in August, Midler fainted. She took this as a cue to reroute herself. "I thought it was really over and that I was dying," she says. "I couldn't understand why I was killing myself. Now I am going to sit down and figure out if I want to go on in the same vein or take another road."

The route in mind is a natural for Midler: "I think I could be a stand-up comedienne. I am one already, in a sense." She says she is willing to take a chance with comedy. Midler sees the career change as "less demanding. I wouldn't have to worry about radio play, or ruining my voice. Besides, everyone knows me as a funny person. I like this business and would like to stay in it. But now I have to rest the singer in me and take a minute to decide what's important."

In the film, *The Rose,* Midler's self-destructive character uttered the same sentiment shortly before the onstage collapse that ended her life. "I feel like I am the Rose," she retorts, "and I don't want to end up that way."

Midler's chances of ending up that way are slim, especially with her new stance as a writer. As *The Saga of Baby Divine* climbs the charts (some stores stock it as fiction, others as poetry), and her recent *No Frills* record gains in popularity, Midler remains steadfast in her social position. Even if she is not the perfect lady, at least the lady has style. Even if that style has proved irregular, at least Midler has tremendous ambition and determination, not to mention an overstock of grand notions unequaled by anyone, divine or otherwise. ■

Richard Laermer is a free-lance writer living in New York City.

"I think I'll go with the slop."

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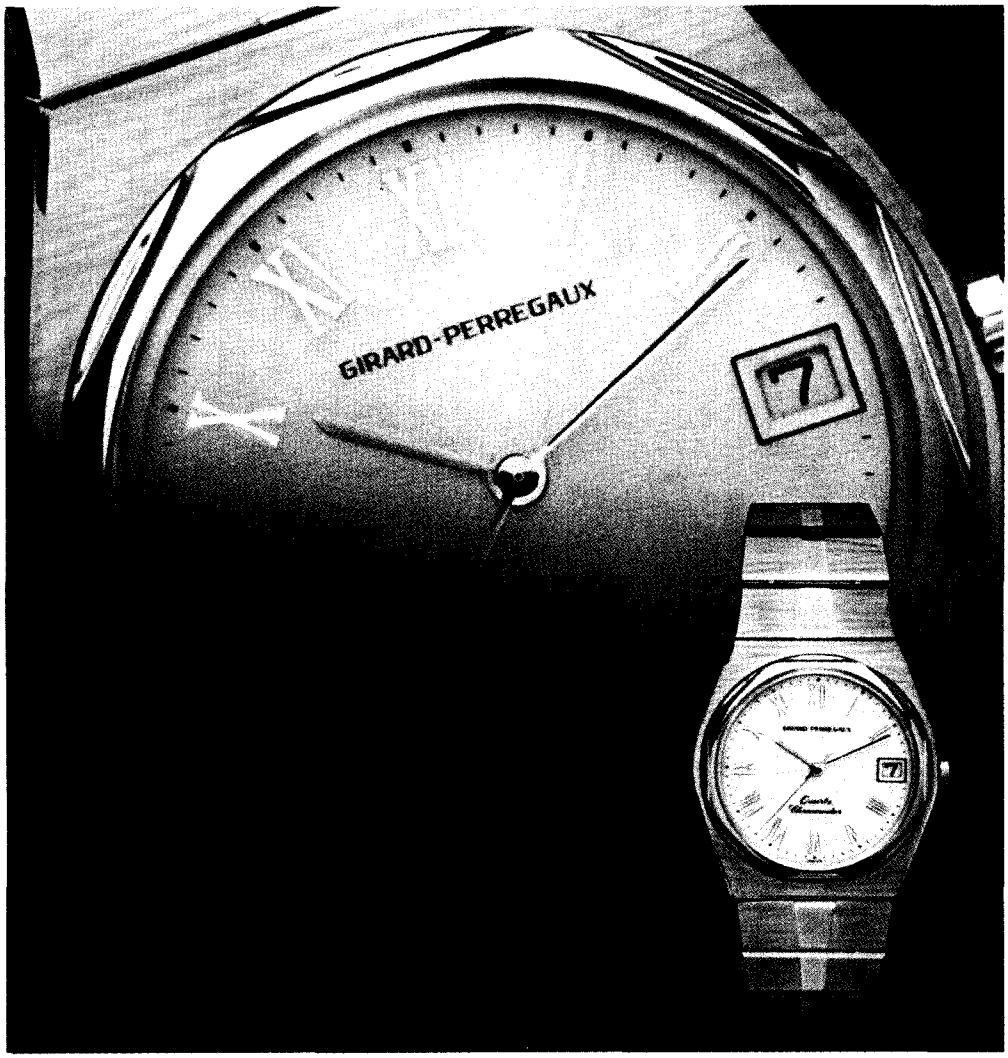

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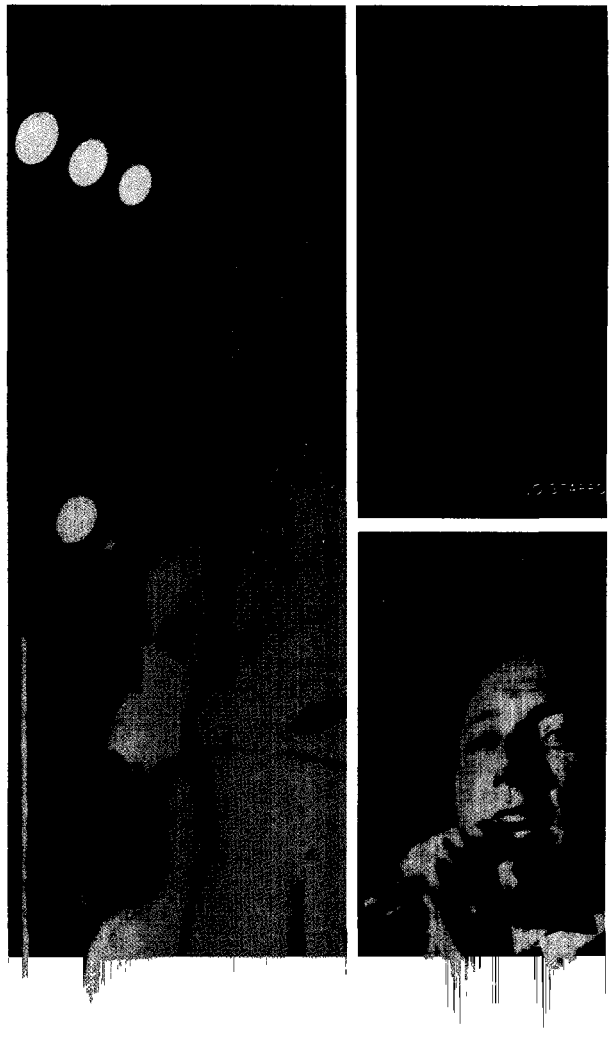

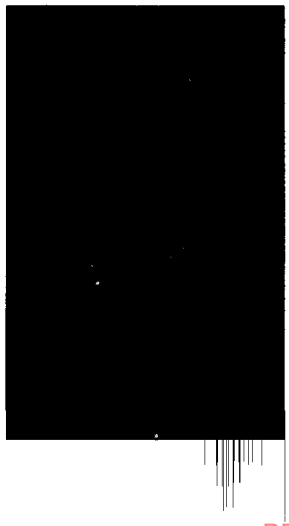

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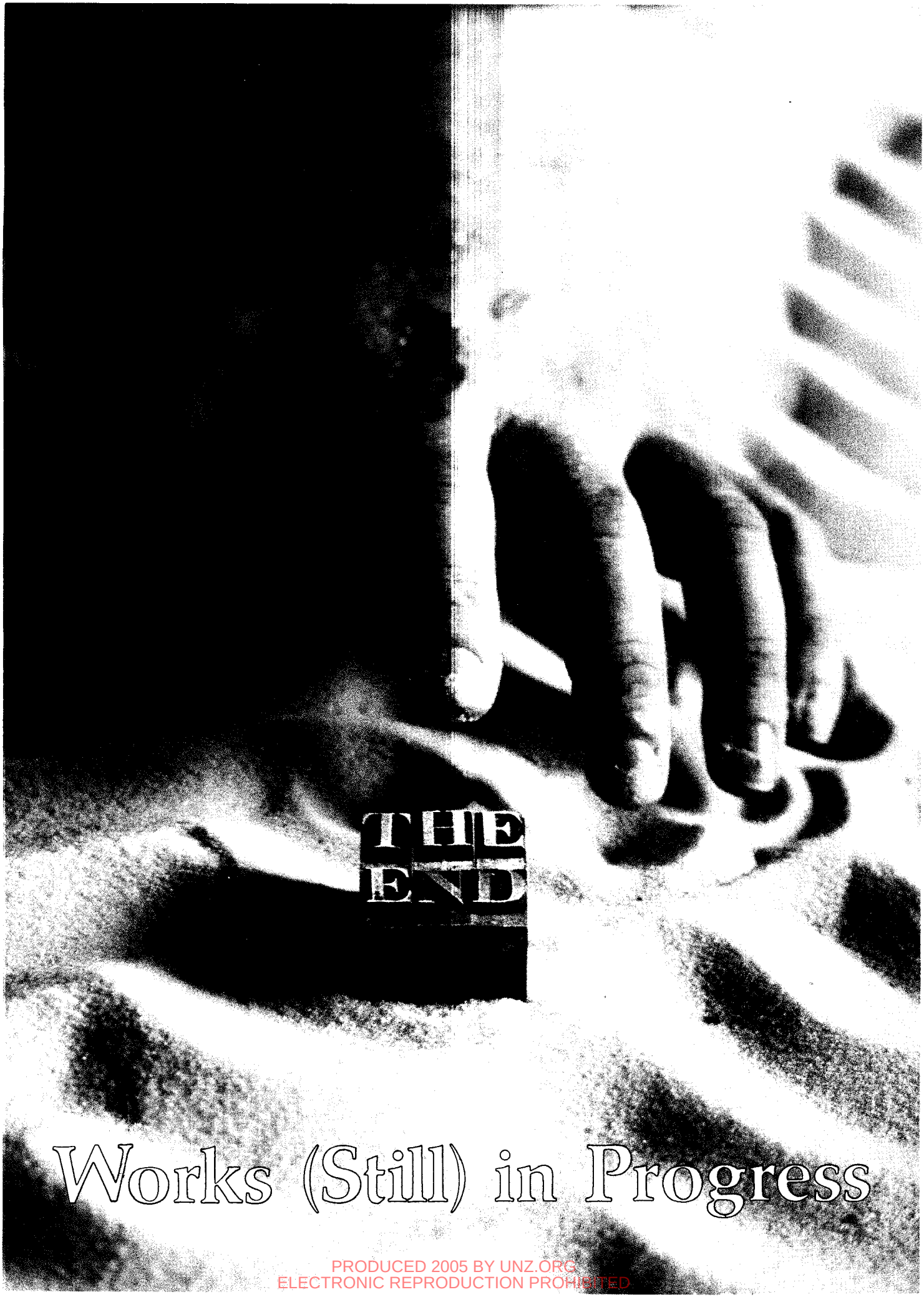

Works (Still) in Progress

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The English literary world of the 1920s, observing with interest the campaign of the notorious James Joyce as published fragments of *Work in Progress* appeared over the course of the decade, was the first generation of readers exposed to what soon became a characteristic occupation of the Modernist era: watching a celebrated writer bring out, over the course of years or even decades, portions of his ongoing *chef d'oeuvre*. The myth of the great modern writer, created mainly by the public images of those twin giants Joyce and Proust, concerns the writer of genius who retires to his garret for years—seven seems the working minimum—and emerges, after harrowing trials, with an enormous masterpiece that recapitulates the entire age. Encyclopedic comprehensiveness became a necessary attribute; true greatness could no longer content itself with illuminating one corner of society or individual experience. Nor could the novelist who aspired to high artistry follow the trend, evident since the Industrial Revolution began to undermine the need for ample leisure in a novel's audience, toward volumes of merely 200 pages. Vaunting ambition put the benchmark back at Victorian lengths. (It also helped if the work received adequate scorn at the hands of the bourgeois press and even encountered trouble finding a publisher.) With writers taking so much time out to create masterpieces, it became necessary to toss some portion into the marketplace at periodic intervals to demonstrate, as it were, that one still had a hand in. The veteran literary politician—which Joyce was, more so even than Norman Mailer—thus has had to publish fragments at intervals frequent enough to ensure he does not appear vanished from the contemporary scene, while keeping his real gaze, of course, on posterity. Under such circumstances, publishing works in progress becomes a kind of game, like Joyce's attempts to keep his friends guessing at the title of *Finnegans Wake*.

Since Modernism has vanished, along with the Europe *entre deux guerres* that had been its hothouse garden, one might expect this phenomenon to be as unfashionable as was the Modernists' alignment of avant-garde aesthetics with reactionary politics. The conceit, however, has outlived its begetters. As Anthony Burgess has wryly noted, American writers today have unprecedented access to grants and academic subsidy, and can afford to spend years on single books. Some, like Thomas Pynchon, may pass their years in silent industry, bringing forth their finished works as unexcerpted wholes. For others a kind of fan dance seems to apply, revealing in anthologies and periodicals a flash here and a peek there of a work whose completed form exists only in the artist's imagination, like a magician's gesturing but empty sleeve. Following such works becomes rather like watching an old matinee serial—save that there is no guarantee when the next installment might appear—or following a chess match conducted by packet mail.

Interminable works in progress remain peculiar to belles-lettres, in which the writer cannot expect to make a living by his fiction and is consequently freed, in a fashion, to devote as much time as he wants to one book. Over the past ten years one could keep up with various longtime projects by favorite writers, some of which, like *Something Happened* by Joseph Heller, eventually appeared, while others, like Truman Capote's *Answered Prayers*, threaten never to. On arriving at college I was able to search the library stacks for old quarterlies containing fragments of Ralph Ellison's second novel, begun around the time I was born. William H. Gass, William Gaddis, Harold Brodkey, and others all had promising works in progress, and one's partaking of their partial unveilings held a trace of excitement, of currency, that approaching a completed and stationary masterpiece like a volume of Dickens on the shelf could not rival.

But many of these books never appeared—abandoned, set aside for other projects, or stretched out over the years while nominally in progress like rail lines vanishing in the distance. William Styron published part of a novel about the Marines, which promised to have the lowest cholesterol level of all his writings, then set it aside for *Sophie's Choice*. Norman Mailer mounted three separate assaults on the slopes of the "big novel" before launching the campaign that resulted in *Ancient Evenings*; each time he fell back, though he bore fragments that included "The Man Who Studied Yoga," "Advertisements for Myself on the Way Out," "The Time of Her Time," and *Why Are We in Vietnam?*—interestingly, his finest fiction until now. But others found their talents unequal to the task, or could not marshal the energies of their inspiration to cover the spreading years. The massive works that seem to resist completion appear to be those most autobiographical in origin—works that, given ambition's current impulse toward ubiquity, demand a scope over which even the intensely self-conscious author cannot maintain control. What artist could declare complete an elaborate metaphor for his own experiential consciousness? Proust did not manage so much. So we have the writer struggling to impose a satisfying form upon an intractable mass of material or manuscript, as with Harold Brodkey's *A Party of Animals*, now reportedly comprising 4,000 pages and announced as forthcoming "next year," every year since 1973; or *Answered Prayers*, whose author and magazine editors have generated extraordinary publicity campaigns attendant upon the appearance of a few wispy sections to cover the enterprise's pathetic failure to achieve fruition.

BY GREGORY FEELEY

A literary masterpiece can take on a life of its own, often demanding a length and scope beyond the capabilities of its creator.

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The practice of protracted composition has other perils, which the authors themselves may not grant. Anthony Burgess has remarked on the distortions that result when the dynamic imagination continues to develop and deepen during years of labor on a single book. *Ulysses* suffers from this expansion of artistic preoccupation and ability, though this fact is generally obscured by the (actually superficial) symbolic and allusive systems underlying the work. William H. Gass, at work on *The Tunnel* since 1966, may be falling prey to this phenomenon. I loved the early fragments that I read, because they resembled *Omensetter's Luck* (1966); I am disquieted by the more recent ones, because they threaten to vanish beneath the verbal foliation set loose in *The Word Within the World* (1978). Future students may be asked to consider the differences between a writer's early and later styles by examining various passages of the same book.

Some authors, of course, divide their time between these and other projects, as Gass, who writes slowly but not that slowly, may protest he is doing. Thomas M. Disch, who has been publishing portions of his novel *The Pressure of Time* since 1970, has alternated work on this with other books, including his celebrated *334* and *Neighboring Lives*. Asked why he is taking so long with the project, Disch explains that the richness of his themes—"the betrayal of love; the destruction of love; the resurrection of love"—is such that one might profitably spend his life exploring them through the gallery of one work. Such procedure does not sit well with the schedules of publishers, or the expectations of readers; but Disch, heartened by the vein he seemed to have discovered in his writings, bought back *The Pressure of Time* from Alfred A. Knopf and set a price on the uncompleted book that prevented it for a long time from finding a buyer. With luck, the trajectory of the novel's form shall trace a tighter curve than that of Disch's own life.

Installment-following brings its own small pleasures, at least for the reader prepared for longer waits than the usual twelve months before the paperback. When William Gaddis published the opening section of *JR* in *The Dutton Review* in 1970, the fragment was rich with appurtenances: a subtitle, an epigraph, and the titular initials drolly linked to form a kind of ideogram. When the novel appeared five years later, all this was gone; the work, bereft even of chapter divisions, had been stripped down to an austerity of form as beautiful and pure as an ice sculpture. The point is worth a footnote in anybody's dissertation, and other readers can enjoy it on their own.

Good or bad, the stereotype of the serious novelist working endlessly on the thousand-page masterpiece has replaced that durable model from the Fifties and early Sixties of the successful first novelist terrified by the perils of his second novel. (The other current one is the popular novelist parlaying for the $3 million advance.) The extent of this can be indicated by the portrayal in Mario Puzo's novel *Fools Die* of the author Osano and his unwritable six-figure masterpiece. The characterization is a scurrilous distortion of Mailer's well-known efforts throughout the Seventies on his long novel, as hopeful Puzo, with an eye on his own chances in the $3 million sweepstakes, imagines the public would like to hear tell of it. That the canny scriptaster considers such a character fit material for the torrid landscapes of the popular novel, generally reserved for capricious superstars, powerful producers, or young geniuses with streaks of the demonic painted by the numbers, indicates the degree to which this figure has achieved wide familiarity.

Final word on these enterprises must await their eventual disposition, and one hopes the *Books in Print* for the 1990s will list hefty volumes by Gass, Ellison—perhaps even J.D. Salinger's unfinished saga, or Solzhenitsyn's sequels to *August 1914*. A matrix of economic and social factors today allows prominent writers to spend periods resembling those allotted for Soviet agricultural plans to get their books done; accordingly, that is how long they are beginning to take. Initial results, however, imply that the monuments our endowed authors spend years creating may not finally be worth the effort. Certainly *Letters*, John Barth's edifice to the canons of modernist self-reference, will remain an inhospitable cathedral, occasionally remarked upon but rarely entered.

Critical historians of the future will argue about whether our age's preoccupation with achieving it all in one work was a last, dubious legacy from the era of High Modernism, the first period to insist on art's divorce from an audience that includes the unsophisticated. Its disdain for modesty of scope may impel gifted writers toward epic undertaking beyond their talents, leaving us with less than we might have had. Modernism had at least one such figure: Robert Musil, whose unfinished and unfinishable novel *The Man Without Qualities* had spread out after thirty-seven years in the works to the point of dissolution in its ever-widening reach and multiple drafts. Malcolm Lowry, who admittedly had other problems, insisted on subsuming his published masterpiece *Under the Volcano* into keystone position within a huge prose cycle, *The Voyage That Never Ends*. Lowry, whose ambition to encompass within *Under the Volcano*'s single day the lineaments of Earth, hell, and eternity—Joyce's influence was badly assimilated—succeeded, or nearly succeeded, when confined to a single novel; but the vastly greater framework diffused Lowry's erratically managed talents, and he completed no single project in the remaining decade of his life.

Aesthetic theorists of the Romantic period were much attracted by the suggestiveness of incomplete or fragmentary works—more so in art than in literature, though Novalis and Mallarmé were enthusiasts—and found in truncated or preliminary pieces a spontaneity and dramatic vibrancy missing in fully realized works. The German poet Schlegel sought to create this effect in his own work, and Edgar Wind describes in *Art and Anarchy* how others have suggested, with various degrees of literal intent, smashing up ancient pieces to "restore" their original power. Future historians, surveying the literature of this era, may find it rich in brilliant fragments, like recovered portions of lost wholes; but left so by forfeit, not design or decay: rising like broken spars above the shoals of failed ambition. ■

Gregory Feeley is a free-lance writer living in New Haven, Connecticut. He is working on a biography of James Blish.

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Nancy Goldner

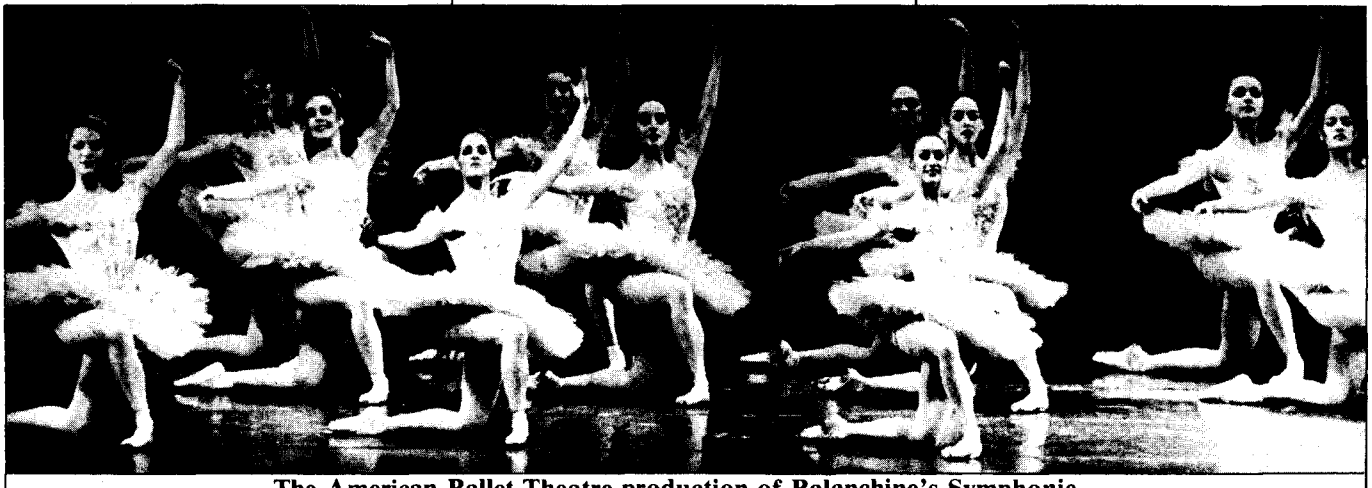
A Balanchine Act

A characteristic of great art is that it reveals the passions of its maker. People, by nature, want more than passion; they want to know the artist's opinions about his work, those usually disclosed by a biographer. Considering the intensely public nature of George Balanchine's art—the New York City Ballet enacts his passions before thousands of people every night—very little is known about Balanchine's opinions. As a substitute for biography, the public has only the evolutions of New York City Ballet repertory as a chart of his mind. Dance fans adore speculating on why ballet *X* was retired so quickly, whether ballet *Y* is in storage until the right ballerina comes along again, whether *Z* is a lost ballet by chance or by design. These speculations are wonderful sport, but they are futile, especially when pondering old works. How can one imagine what Balanchine might have thought about a ballet one has never seen? In my own case, how can I trust the memories and critical impressions of ballets I saw for the first and last time when I was 10 years old?

Thus the general hoopla and private curiosity this year when American Ballet Theatre performed a revival of a Balanchine ballet not performed anywhere since 1952. Made in 1945 for a special student performance, Mozart's Symphonie Concertante in E flat major is one of the famous "lost" ballets, not danced and so not remembered. It was performed by Balanchine's professional company (then called Ballet Society) in 1947, and in 1952 the New York City Ballet dropped it permanently. But a notation score of Symphonie Concertante had been made, and in 1982 a ballet master at American Ballet Theatre, with the help of a notation specialist, was able to reconstruct it.

The coincidence of Symphonie Concertante being resurrected at the time of Balanchine's death imbues the ballet with unbearable poignancy and an almost cruel irony. By what demonic innocence does the child dance over the grave of his father? (That irony holds for the home company as well, whose radiance during the season of the death was as painful as it was comforting.) Yet Balanchine's death makes it imperative that the story of his art be fully known. Even if Symphonie Concertante were, in what was Balanchine's favorite pejorative, the "lousiest" ballet he ever made, it would be welcome.

Well, Symphonie Concertante is not a very good ballet; it's a disquietingly almost-good ballet. It begins with a straight-laced processional for part of the ensemble, which is fine for openers. Then the second platoon comes in, and the third, bringing the total number to twenty-two. One wants the lens of the stage to open accordingly. Symphonie Concertante grows busier but not grander. The clinching disappointment comes with the introduction of the score's major, and beautiful, melody. Although Balanchine graces that melody by bringing on the two ballerinas, he doesn't give them major-melody phrases to dance. They simply repeat the jumps the corps has done. This and other repetitions give the dance structural integrity but break an important Balanchinian law: instinctual musicality supersedes tidiness. Symphonie Concertante is tidy above all. One ballerina follows the violin dutifully, the other follows



MARTHA SWOPE

The American Ballet Theatre production of Balanchine's Symphonie Concertante: A disquietingly almost-good ballet.

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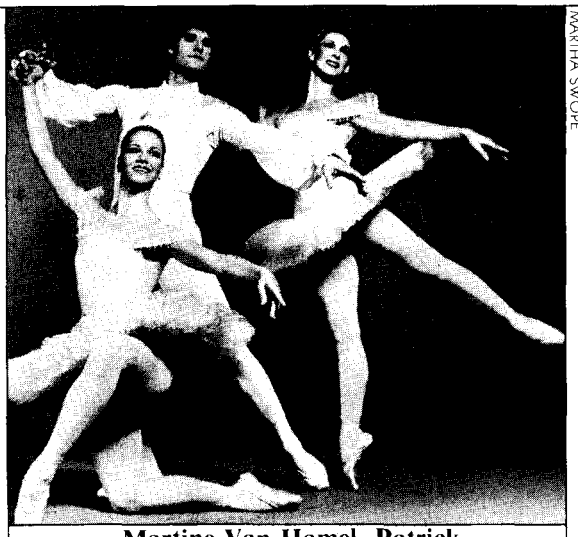
the viola, and the corps follows the orchestra with appropriately timed *ports de bras* and *tendus*.

A work made for students, Symphonie Concertante also looks made by a student. And that's where the interest lies. By the time Balanchine began to work in the West, in 1924, he was already a mature artist. Although Symphonie Concertante does not turn the clock back to Balanchine's apprenticeship (if indeed he ever had one), it does reveal a blueprint for the great ballet that was to come two years later, the Bizet Symphony in C. In its use of the ensemble, the Mozart auditions for an impact that in the Bizet is gloriously manifest: with a flick of its collective ankle, the ensemble shakes the world. The force of the ensemble is a force of nature in the Bizet, while in the Mozart you can hear Balanchine crashing the cymbals backstage.

Another reason Symphonie Concertante is uninspired is because it doesn't feature a pas de deux in the adagio movement. Balanchine arranged instead a pas de trois for the two ballerinas and a cavalier, supported by an ensemble of six women. If the trio offered the intimacies and mysteries of Balanchine's duets, it would be a tour de force in transcendence—an intrinsically chummy, or triangular, situation redefining itself as a love configuration. There *is* nobility in the trio's impersonal character and there is a glimpse of the heroic in the cavalier's equanimity when flanked by two goddesses. Balanchine shows us that adagio can work as pure meter, without support of the love metaphor. Like the ensemble tactics, however, this experiment comes to fuller fruition in a later ballet, the Mozart Divertimento No. 15. It's no wonder Balanchine lost Symphonie Concertante once Symphony in C and the second Mozart piece were found.

Only one passage, I think, shows the poet Balanchine in operation. Toward the end of the second movement, as the music begins to swell, the cavalier faces the back of the stage and walks slowly toward crisscrossing lines of women, his arms rising as though beholding his fate. When the two ballerinas re-enter to execute some very steppy combinations, all allusion to anything but the beat is lost. And then, magically, Balanchine brings the ineffable back onto the stage as the cavalier joins the two ballerinas, and together they begin an arm-entwined journey toward the wings. In the closing bars of music the six women loop around them, and the cortege exits as a self-contained, yet eternally evolving mass of limbs. Finally, the adagio achieves the humane.



MARTHA SWOPE

Martine Van Hamel, Patrick Bissell, and Cynthia Gregory.

It is achieved despite the wooden performances given by American Ballet Theatre, but there is not much other flight for ABT to block. If you will pardon a 10-year-old's opinion, the original Symphonie Concertante with the New York City Ballet was always something of a bore, even when Maria Tallchief, Todd Bolender, and Tanaquil LeClercq were the principals. As I remember the staging from the early 1950s, the ballerinas danced close together. The current production might gain some flash if the two ladies played violin and viola neck and neck instead of working in an isolation intended, I surmise, to convey regality. Absolutely certain is that Symphonie Concertante would be more fun if the principals of the three casts I saw behaved less like old biddies or like children gussied up for a visit to their great aunt. The choreography's academic tenor is only underlined by the dancers' overly careful attack. After four months of performance, the dancers still seem to be studying themselves in the classroom mirror.

ABT's timid relationship with the Balanchine repertory it possesses is a pity, and it becomes all the more so considering Mikhail Baryshnikov's wise decision to obtain as much of it as he can. Baryshnikov became artistic director of ABT after dancing just a few seasons with the New York City Ballet. His relationship with that company and Balanchine was also timid, but it's now clear that he was more influenced by Balanchine's method than was apparent at the time. It is significant that Baryshnikov is upgrading the ensemble at ABT, and that, like Balanchine, he enthusiastically promotes young ballerinas. Yet Baryshnikov's adventurousness stops short with the performance of Balanchine ballets. I don't know what kind of tea is handed out during rehearsals, but it's not Russian, and by the time the Balanchine ballets reach the stage, everyone has settled down for a wee sip with the Queen Mother. ■

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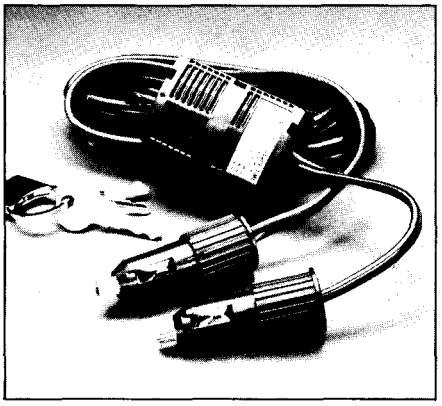

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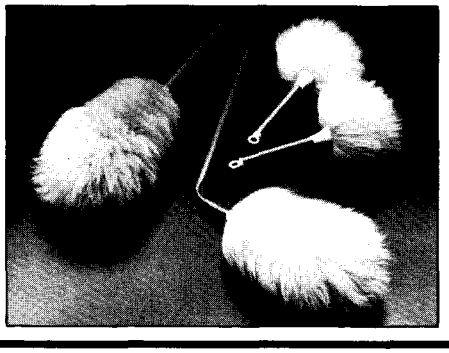

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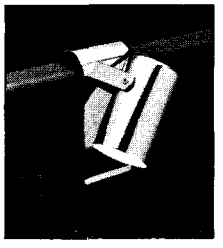

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Judith Crist

A Fallen Star

There are—with or without the folderol of press-agentry—"events" in a movie season, with our current events new films by Bob Fosse, Constantine Costa-Gavras, Robert Altman, and Carlos Saura.

With *Sweet Charity, Cabaret, Lenny,* and *All That Jazz* behind him, and eight Tonys, an Emmy, and an Oscar won, Fosse has turned to the Dorothy Stratten story in *STAR 80*, a beautifully crafted film.

Stratten was a Vancouver, B.C., teen-ager who was taken in and exploited by a local hustler, Paul Snider, whose efforts on her behalf led to her coming to Los Angeles in August of 1978, appearing as a *Playboy* centerfold a year later, and in 1980, being named Playmate of the Year. Along the way she had married Snider, who was obsessed with her and with her career (STAR 80 was the license plate of the Mercedes he talked her into buying him). As her career took off with film work and a live-in relationship with a well-known director, Stratten sought an end to their marriage. On August 14, 1980, the 20-year-old beauty was murdered, Snider a suicide beside her. A few months later her story was detailed in *The Village Voice* by Teresa Carpenter, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist; a year later it was told in an NBC made-for-television movie, *Death of a Centerfold: The Dorothy Stratten Story;* her director-lover is preparing a book on their relationship for publication next year; and now the Fosse film.

What Fosse offers is a pseudo-documentary exploration of an ill-fated relationship, complete with "witnesses" to testify to various events and quick-cuts to a blood-splattered Snider pleading his crazed case. The film traces his encountering her as a Dairy Queen counter girl, buying her a prom gown, luring her into nude photographs, teaching her self-possession and style, taking her to Los Angeles, and losing her to the *Playboy* world of "glamour"—a rather staid world, it would seem, with a paternal, pajama-clad Hefner presiding over a perpetual house party peppered with well-behaved playmates. (Need we note that Hefner and *Playboy* cooperated with the film makers?) With the threatening quick-cuts, we follow Stratten as future victim, a tint of tragedy-to-come coloring her career advances. And somewhere along the line we suspect that Fosse is trying to tell us that commercial exploitation of beauty and sexuality can come to no good, while in reality he is offering us a succulent melodrama about a lovely young woman in thrall to a borderline madman, without the energy or intelligence to break the bond, or, at the very least, find someone to help her do so. The ultimate sadness of Stratten's story is that of all the people involved with her, none seemed aware of the actualities of her situation, of the dangers inherent in her passivity and innocence.

Jill Clayburgh in *Hanna K.*

All who knew her emphasize that sweet innocence, and Mariel Hemingway, a Junoesque beauty, sustains the image. But it is Eric Roberts' Snider who dominates. Roberts, memorable in *King of the Gypsies, Raggedy Man,* and on stage in the original production of *Mass Appeal,* is a complete fascination as a small-timer fixated on a woman as the object of and vehicle for his dreams and aspirations. Carol Baker, credible as Stratten's observant but equally passive mother; Roger Rees, as Stratten's director-lover; and Cliff Robertson, as a warmhearted Hugh Hefner, are noteworthy. Sven Nykvist's cinematography gives a glow to the elegant production, enhanced by Ralph Burns' score. Most impressive, however, is Fosse's objectivity, his impartiality of viewpoint despite the obvious beauty-and-the-beast implications. The final inference? So much for the kiss-kiss trust-me of the glamour world.

Constantine Costa-Gavras has established himself as the master of the fact-based political thriller. From *Z* (1969) through *The Confession* (1970), *State of Siege* (1973), *Special Section* (1975), and *Missing* (1982), he has offered us the heart-rending human drama behind the headline. Now he has turned to fiction with *Hanna K.* and proves that it is not his forte.

Costa-Gavras and the late Franco Solinas have concocted an incredible and tedious tale set in contemporary Jerusalem, controversial in its thesis that no Palestinian can find justice in Israel, and that the Israelis are paranoid chauvinists. Filmed in Israel and Italy, the movie is international

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in cast. In the title role there's Jill Clayburgh, our favorite unmarried woman but scarcely the sexpot of the ages. Hanna is presented to us as an American whose relatives suffered in the Holocaust; somehow she got to Paris and married a Catholic; then she ran off with a lover to a kibbutz in Israel; when that romance ended, she studied law (not very well, judging from her courtroom performances). When we meet her, she is pregnant by her current lover, who is a sabra and the district attorney. She has called upon her husband (divorce is not their style) to take her to Paris for an abortion, illegal in Israel. But in the meantime, she has been assigned to defend a Palestinian who was caught sneaking across the border; she becomes involved in his case because he's simply trying to reclaim the old family homestead in a nearby village that has been developed as an Israeli community. The abortion goes by the board. By the time the baby is born (and we're pointlessly treated to a circumcision ceremony with no blood barred), the Palestinian—who, need we note, is very handsome—has been paroled in Hanna's custody after a series of legal maneuvers. The D.A. thinks he's a terrorist; Hanna doesn't and lets him move into her bed; her husband wants her back. There you have the gist of a romantic and political quadrangle that takes two hours in the creation and five unpleasant moments to reach its banal and offensive conclusion.

In 1979 Costa-Gavras departed from his usual milieu with *Clair de Femme,* an unsuccessful pseudo-poetic study of an ill-fated romance. This time he enforces the impression that his terrain is not the female psyche: Clayburgh emerges as a willful, self-centered woman of little sophistication and less sensuality. There seems to be small reason for the three men—Jean Yanne as her husband, Gabriel Byrne as the D.A., and Mohamed Bakri as the Palestinian—to be in her thrall. All four are skilled professionals, trapped, alas, in a slow-moving and superficial concoction. For Costa-Gavras, it is a Homeric nod.

For Robert Altman, it's a second stage-to-film venture, a literally stunning adaptation by David Rabe of the playwright's 1976 *Streamers.* The play, which completed Rabe's so-called Vietnam trilogy that included *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel* and *Sticks and Bones,* was the most powerful of his works, and Altman has brought it to the screen with dynamite force.

Set in an Army barracks in 1965 and confined therein, it is concerned with four young recruits—an Ivy League homosexual, a Midwest intellectual, a "liberal" black, and a "bad" street black—and two loutish, middle-aged sergeants. What ensues is a slow-to-start and then swiftly accelerated emergence of pasts and relationships that are doomed by the sudden explosion of violence. It is, in effect, a journey toward death, symbolized by Rabe in the paratroopers' lingo, wherein the "streamer" is the man hurtling to death with the white blossom of an unopened parachute trailing behind him.

The stage roots are evident, but Altman has turned both the dramatic speeches and the claustrophobic set to his advantage, letting the actors—four talented young players as the recruits, and two old hands as the alcohol-soaked, dimwitted sergeants—rule the screen. The result is an engrossing and harrowing film.

And for a second time—after 1981's *Blood Wedding*—Carlos Saura, the fine Spanish film maker, and Antonio Gades, the great flamenco dancer, have collaborated to bring us a splendid and unique *Carmen.* This is no mere film-and-dance version of the Bizet work: it is a magnificent blend of contemporary drama, dance, and classical music that offers delight and satisfaction on every level. Gades, as Antonio, is on the screen as the director-choreographer of a present-day Spanish dance company preparing his troupe for a production of *Carmen,* set to the operatic score. His search for a leading lady—"that devilish girl"—leads him to Laura del Sol, a dancer actually named Carmen. As the rehearsals intensify, a romance develops between the director and his leading lady; before long it begins to parallel the onstage drama of love and betrayal.

What others have attempted, Saura and Gades succeed in doing in penetrating the psyche of the creative artist. Going back and forth between the passion of the opera and dance and the offstage relationship between director and performer, they blend reality and fantasy to brilliant effect. The dancing and the drama are superb. Bizet's score is complemented by vocals by Regina Resnick and Mario del Monaco, who recorded one of the finest *Carmens* of all time, and by the solo guitar of Paco de Lucia. Saura and Gades have given us a dazzling and memorable work. ■

Mariel Hemingway and Eric Roberts in *STAR 80.*

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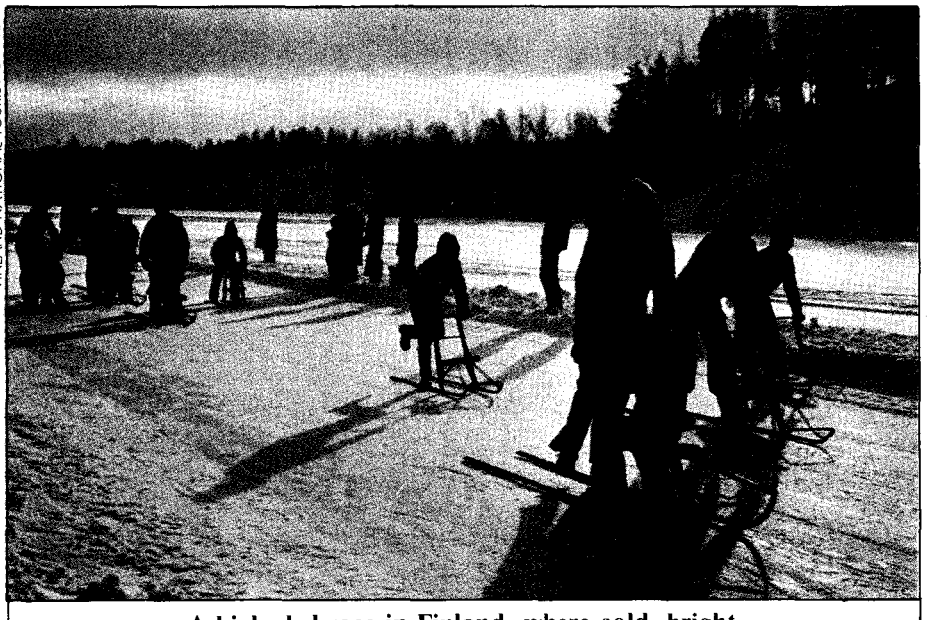
FINLAND NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE

Uspenski Cathedral in Helsinki, Finland, a city which seems to flourish through the long Nordic winter.

FINLAND NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE



A kick-sled race in Finland, where cold, bright days are the rule after the solstice.

This is the time of year when travel ads sing the glories of Europe in winter. We're reminded not only that the theaters, opera houses, and cafes are in full swing, but the air fares are cheaper, the hotels emptier, the natives kinder. None of this can be disputed. Of course, the ads fail to mention the gloomy and sodden weather that descends on most European capitals from November to April.

Two shining exceptions are Oslo, Norway, and Helsinki, Finland, which seem to flourish through the long Nordic winter. Cold, bright days are the rule at these latitudes. Once the solstice is past and the daylight is no longer confined to banker's hours, the residents of Oslo and Helsinki pull on their boots or snap on their skis and go willingly, even eagerly, into the elements.

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David Butwin

Paradise Frost

When I arrived one wintry Sunday morning, Oslo was shoveling out from a two-day blizzard that had dumped seventy-five centimeters of snow and turned the city into a muffled white wonderland. The snowfall had been preceded by a rain and quick freeze, causing small trees and bushes to bend under the added weight like praying white monks. The city seemed frozen in another era. As I passed the broad corner windows of the old Grand Hotel cafe and saw a man sipping a beer as he bent over his paper, I imagined it was a century ago and Henrik Ibsen was at his favorite table at the Grand.

I had stopped in Oslo for a day or two to overcome jet lag and get my ski legs before catching a train to Vinstra for a week on the cross-country trails of the Gudbrandsdal Valley. What I didn't realize is that you can get a full diet of skiing without going beyond the well-groomed paths of the Oslomarka, the huge, protected forest that surrounds the capital city. In just twenty minutes a downtown tram can deposit you in the snows of Holmenkollen just above Oslo, carrying a cargo of skis and poles on its outside racks.

Holmenkollen, an attractive, wooded suburb, is the site of a famous ski-jump competition that takes place each March. Holmenkollen Sunday brings out 120,000 people to the ski-jump finals, a climax to a week of special concert performances and winter sport contests involving local schoolchildren, members of the Norwegian Parliament, and Europe's best winter athletes.

Sundays are the most popular ski days in Oslo, when 70,000 of the city's 400,000 residents fan out into the forests on 1,500 miles of trails. I had heard complaints about the Sunday ski crowds, but even on the well-used Holmenkollen terrain, I was able to endure my usual Chevy Chase pratfalls in relative solitude.

On the following day, the trails were positively deserted by comparison. In the company of two Norwegian friends, I followed the long, white avenues through the pines, passing neatly marked signposts and a host of those praying white monks. Each trail has two sets of tracks so traffic can go in both directions. Night skiing is also popular around Oslo, but I wanted to save those hours for the indoor pleasures of that warm and commodious city.

I found none of summer's crowds at the marvelous Munch Museum, whose convenient viewing hours of 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. accommodate workers as well as daytime skiers. And the cafes buzz well into the night, not only at the Grand Hotel but also at the restaurant Blom, and the Theatre Cafe in the Continental Hotel, a gathering place of artists and writers.

In Helsinki, the lengthening days of late winter are almost as enchanting as the shadowless midsummer evenings. Much of the snow had melted away from the lawns and parks when I arrived, but a thick mantle of ice still covered the Gulf of Finland, which rims the city. One evening, as I waited for a friend to pick me up at my gulf-side hotel, the Kalastajatorppa, I stood dazzled as the sun dropped behind distant pines and the sky began to darken above the glowing icecap. When I gushed about the scene to my friend, she grew misty herself and said: "We call it the 'blue moment.' It is something like the French *l'heure bleu*, that perfect twilight moment when you are sitting on the Champs Elysées and the day is closing. And yet, I think the best blue moment is right here at this time of year, when the snow is still on the ground and the sky is very clear."

Helsinki may not be blanketed with as much ski terrain as Oslo, but it has a twenty-kilometer course in a wooded park near the stadium and endless opportunities on the gulf. To ski the gulf, you probably should stick close to the shoreline, unless you have the nerve and persistence of a Helsinki friend who set off alone one day with map and compass on a thirty-kilometer trek across the ice. "I passed only two people all day," he said a bit grimly. "I don't think I will do it again."

Though the outdoor market and the cafes along the Esplanade close in winter, its fine little shops are more inviting than ever. Seen one after another, the shops provide an ideal survey of celebrated Finnish design. Marimekko is one, of course, still in good hands despite the death of its founder, Armi Ratia, in 1979. Pentik has a novel selection of leather and ceramic objects. Aarikka blends natural woods into jewelry, toys, clocks, and curtains. And Vuokko has become an even more desirable label than Marimekko, at least among the Helsinki women I canvassed.

Another lesson in Finnish design awaits you twenty miles away at Hvitträsk, a lake-side compound built as a country escape at the turn of the century by the young architect Eliel Saarinen and two of his colleagues. The main building, now a state-run museum, looks much like it did when Saarinen used it as a house and studio. One of the Hvitträsk buildings is now a restaurant, and another is a small hotel with room enough for six guests, who are welcome to use the handsome log sauna at water's edge.

Near the sauna is a crevice sawed in the ice. This is no ice-fishing hole, but a plunging bath for sauna users. "If you are a foreigner and you go into the lake, you get a diploma," said Anita Ehrnrooth, the spirited and informative caretaker of Hvitträsk. She may have been dangling a challenge, but I was not about to bite. ■

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TRADE WINDS

William Cole

Classy Titles

Poets from Up North

In her introduction to *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Verse in English* (Oxford, $25), poet-editor Margaret Atwood says, "Being in an Oxford anthology is like getting your baby boots bronzed: the aim is durability." And here the durables are, from Robert Hayman, born circa 1575, to Roo Borson, born 1952. Not many names along the way familiar to American readers, with the exception of Robert W. Service, Leonard Cohen, Malcolm Lowry, and the anthologist herself. There's a generous selection from my favorite, Irving Layton, who appeared in the 1950s, "like brightly colored frangipani," and some good verses by another favorite, Alden Nowlan, and, indeed, many by the writer who probably hates to be called the "Grand Old Man of Canadian Poetry," Earle Birney, born in 1904. In fact, he's still going strong. Here's a little love poem he wrote in 1978: *My Love is Young.*

my love is young & i am old
she'll need a new man soon
but still we wake to clip and talk
to laugh as one
to eat and walk

good moon good sun
that we do love
i pray the world believe me
& never tell me when it's time
that i'm to die
or she's to leave me

The Disagreeable Traveler

We recently had a book, *Blue Highways,* by an agreeable traveler, William Least Heat Moon, who liked almost everybody he met as he rode around the fringe of the United States. Now comes Paul Theroux, with *The Kingdom by the Sea,* subtitled "A Journey Around the Coast of Great Britain" (Houghton Mifflin, $15.95). He neither likes, nor enjoys meeting, people. Yet it's fun to read his encounters, in which he usually has the last word, frequently rather a nasty one. He walked, hitched, and took branch-line trains (which he loved), and he bitches about the weather, the accommodations in bed-and-breakfasts, and the people: "Speaking to strangers was regarded as challenging in England: it meant entering a minefield of verbal and social distinctions." He liked the Welsh, and oddly, the people of Ulster. He writes that England is the most difficult culture on earth to explain, that the English find foreigners funny because they aren't English, and that it is impossible for anyone to become English. He calls Yarmouth a fine place, and Tenby in Wales a watering place fulfilling its purpose—"calming me, soothing me." He calls the Scottish landscape lovely and severe, and lists Skye in the Hebrides as "a place I wished to return to." But "I came to hate Aberdeen more than any place I saw," with "a four-legged oil rig . . . like a mechanical sea monster defecating in shallow water." Also, ugh, "Blackpool was perfectly reflected in the swollen guts and unhealthy fat of its beer-guzzling visitors." He has some striking images: from a train window in Scotland he sees a sheepshearer "kneeling against a fat sheep and clipping her with hand shears. . . . He was clipping the creature gently, and the sheep was not struggling much. It was as if the shearer was giving his big child a haircut." Theroux's *The Great Railway Bazaar* is a travel classic. His second travel book, *The Old Patagonian Express,* brought out his intellectual arrogance, and it remains with this third book. But still, it's fun to read, especially with an atlas at hand.

Our Nine Classes

It takes class to write about class in America, and Paul Fussell has it, as shown in *Class,* subtitled "A Guide Through the American Status System" (Summit, $14.95). His opening chapter, fittingly titled "A Touchy Subject," makes the point that the upper class loves the topic to come up, and the proletarians don't mind it, having the mistaken belief that class means money. It's middle-class people who hate the thought that such a discussion should occur in our democracy, because they're uneasy about their status. With wit and nerve, Fussell (rhymes with Russell) sets down that we have nine classes: top out-of-sight, upper, upper-middle, middle, high proletarian, mid-proletarian, low proletarian, destitute, and bottom out-of-sight. The top are the Mellons, Rockefellers, DuPonts—people whose houses you can't see from the road. The bottom out-of-sights you can't see either—they're in prison. In between are the rest of us. Our current president "violates virtually every canon of upper-class or even middle upper-class presentation," what with "dyed hair, rouge on cheeks, Windsor knot, and open sports shirt spread over jacket collar." Chapters are devoted to class signs in our clothing, our housing, and our recreation. Speaking of geography, he notes, "a . . . sign of class desirability might be the absence of facilities for bowling." Class is indicated by what we read or don't read, and, of course, our speech. Some indications of the lower reaches of class are bumper stickers, sweet drinks, a TV in the kitchen, an early—or twenty-minute—dinner hour, a high polyester content in clothing. A passing quote: "It's hard to believe that some people tuck pullovers into the top of their

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trousers, but I'm told they do. If this does happen, it's a very low sign." The upper classes take an 8 o'clock dinner, and drink vodka, scotch or Bloody Marys, but never later than 3 p.m. The author probably will be accused of being a snob, but he's the type who couldn't care less (a prole would say "could care less"). Basically, he's putting us on. He introduces an additional class at the end of the book: X class, a class outside class, people who follow none of the rules—bohemians, the talented, the intellectuals, the self-employed—"a sort of unmonied aristocracy." What a Fussell be created by this book!

Lost Books

The constant reader's constant worry is that he will run out of books. He's always looking for discoveries that will amuse, bemuse, instruct, inspire, amaze, or revivify—any or all of the above. Well, relax and get *Writer's Choice: A Library of Rediscoveries* by Linda Sternberg Katz and Bill Katz (Reston/Prentice-Hall, $15.95), which tells about approximately 1,000 books that have been "lost"—unjustly neglected. The editors polled contemporary writers for the names and descriptions of their pets, and also used existing lists from such magazines as *Antaeus, The American Scholar,* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. Among the 400 recommenders are John Asbery, Julia Child, Annie Dillard, Doris Grumbach (who wrote the introduction), Susan Sontag, and Cynthia Ozick. Your correspondent, under his full name, William Rossa Cole, submitted the titles of four of his favorite books: *Enid Bagnold's Autobiography,* which is co-recommended by Donald Hall. I wrote of it: "Bagnold was upper class: spirited, beautiful, talented; she knew all the English literary society in the '20s and '30s (lost her virginity to Frank Harris—and writes very amusingly about it), a wonderful, lively book." Then, *Kilvert's Diary* by Robert Kilvert, an English curate who was born in 1840 and became vicar of a small town on the Welsh border in the 1860s and 1870s. I said: "This lovely book was discovered by William Plomer, who has written the introduction. Wonderful evocations of nature; touching entries about young girls he admired; humorous encounters with the parishioners." Further, *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* by Laurie Lee, about a young man on foot with his fiddle in Spain in the 1930s, available in Penguin paperbound. My fourth and most fervent recommendation, *Lark Rise to Candleford* by Flora Thompson, also in Penguin, the autobiography of a girl growing up in an English hamlet in the late nineteenth century, and then moving on to a larger market town: " . . . rural life in the 1870s and 1880s, when forelocks were pulled to the gentry, and a ten-mile trip was a major undertaking. A dear, sweet girl growing up. A treasure of a book." A handsome illustrated edition just published by Crown costs $17.95. It includes oil and watercolor paintings from the period, engravings, and photographs. Somewhat abridged by Julian Shuckburgh. I hope he has been careful.

Middle-Aged Unmarried

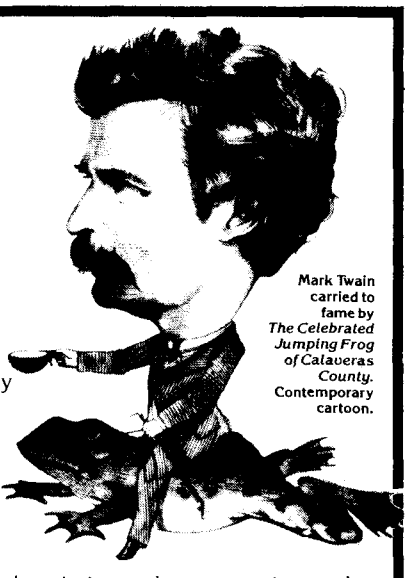
I kept wishing the novel *Foggage* by Patrick McGinley (Joan Kahn/St. Martin's, $11.95) would go on and on. So when it was finished, I read it again. There's nothing really offensive in this story of a middle-aged Irish farmer and his incestuous relations with his twin sister. They call their ancient father, who is upstairs in bed, "His Dotage." The main complication is pregnancy. What will the neighbors and the priest think? How to find a husband for Maureen? A patsy, I guess you'd call him. Much about country types, Irish food (one man eats six pounds of potatoes at a sitting), the church, and the drinking. Foggage? Long grass left over the winter—a commentary on middle-aged unmarried.

Also on Ireland, *The Uncivil Wars* by Padraig O'Malley (Houghton Mifflin, $20), which comes with recommendations by Thomas Flanagan and Seamus Heaney, and is basically interviews with all the leaders, North and South. No solution, but as the author says, his purpose is to stir debate; to have people on every side perhaps inch forward by having them

The Cambridge Guide to English Literature

Compiled by Michael Stapleton

Foreword by Norman Cousins



Mark Twain carried to fame by *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.* Contemporary cartoon.

The Cambridge Guide covers the entire history of literature in English. It will interest and inform serious readers seeking information on John Cheever, crossword-puzzle solvers wanting the name of Sebastian's sister in *Twelfth Night*, and students searching for an understandable definition of *ottava rima*. Among its features are:

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agree, not to what *is* possible, but to what is *not* possible. A serious consideration of the background of the violence in the North.

The Big Issues and the Trivia

The familiar essay is becoming more and more unfamiliar, but thank goodness there are still a few practitioners. Joseph Epstein, the editor of *American Scholar,* is one, and his newest collection of gems is *The Middle of My Tether* (Norton, $14.95). He's interested in the big issues and the trivia, as a cultivated, curious, middle-aged scholar should be: handwriting, the human face, books, growing up, juggling, "The Ephemeral Verities," defining vulgarity. He has a wry sense of humor. Speculating on hell, he says there would be nothing to read, only bound volumes of the *New York Times* oped page. He loathes the phrase "personally insightful," although a reviewer used it to describe one of his books: "Whenever I see that book I feel as a man must who has the name Betty tattooed on his arm though he is married to a woman named Sally." The essays are light, yet have weight. Epstein is as interested in observing other people as he is in keeping an eye on himself.

An Antic Anthology

Light verse, or funny poetry, whichever, gets its first break in many years in *Light Year '84* edited by Robert Wallace, a 144-page, hardbound book. Some very funny stuff by poets not usually considered jokers: Richard Wilbur, May Swenson, Howard Nemerov; and others *known* for their antics: John Updike, Roy Blount Jr., Richard Armour. A great mix of styles: some poems kids will love, others with language not for children. Bookstore price, $12.95, but mention this column and you can have a copy for $9, postage paid. Send to Bits Press, Case Western Reserve, Cleveland, OH 44106. Here's a poem from a sequence, *Brats* by X.J. Kennedy:

A hiss! A gulp!—Where are you, Niles?
Why is your huge pet snake all smiles?
Are you in there, you little dickens,
Where it kind of lumps and thickens?

You Great Big Beautiful Books!

Now the publishers' lists flower with gift books. These seem to be the best of the bouquet:

First in handsomeness: *The Taste of France* (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, $40) has the country divided into fourteen culinary regions, with text by experts on each, and photographs by Robert Freson. A book to drool over. . . . Next, *David Gentleman's Britain* (Dodd, Mead, $27) in which the artist, who has a wonderfully loose way with watercolors, takes us on an informal and informative tour. . . . Two fine books about cowboys, a coincidence, surely: *Cowboy: The Enduring Myth of the Wild West* by Russell Martin (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, $50), the fattest and best designed, is wild with color photos, and *The American Cowboy* by Lonn Taylor and Ingrid Maar (Bessie/Harper & Row, $50), in larger format with less color, is also a beauty of a book. . . . The blockbuster of the season is *The Met* by Martin Mayer (Simon & Schuster, $35), which celebrates the opera's centennial with a lively text and many photographs of fat singers. . . . *Nureyev* by Clive Barnes (Obolensky/Dodd, Mead, $35) has many photos, formal and on-the-street and at-the-party. . . . Down to a normal-sized book with *George Grosz: An Autobiography* (Macmillan, $19.95), about Germany before and between wars, with almost every page enlivened with rather gross Grosz illustrations. . . . *The Arbor House Book of Cartooning* by Mort Gerberg is worth $19.95, especially if you're looking for a gift for a would-be cartoonist. Lots of laughs, too. . . . A really elaborate book, *Paul Iribe* by Raymond Bachollet, Daniel Bordet, and Anne-Claude Lelieur (Alpine Fine Arts, $75) is the biography of Iribe—one of the initiators of art deco, a designer, a Beardsley-like illustrator, a Hollywood art director, and a polemical writer. . . . Photo books: *In America* by Eve Arnold, one of the finest contemporary woman photographers, has 166 color photos of all of us (Knopf, $35). *Annie Liebovitz Photographs* (Pantheon, $35), with an introduction by Tom Wolfe, consists of very hip color portraits of such people as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Mick Jagger, and Dolly Parton. *The Gardens at Giverny* by Stephen Shore (Aperture, $22.50) features Monet's waterlilies, Japanese bridge, etc., in the flesh, as it were. *The Photographs of Lyle Bongé* (Jargon/Inland Book Co., 22 Hemingway Ave., East Haven, CT 06512, $32.50) is by a photographer who sees poetry in a puddle, and turns the commonplace into the miraculous. ■

"Let me see if we're doing anything Thursday night."

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Stanley Kauffmann

Designated Hit

Nothing in our theater is quite like the experience of attending a Broadway smash hit. The audience seems to ascend from enjoyment to quivering excitement, and if the show is a musical, which the biggest hits usually are, it keeps ascending into the mystically communal. Apparently this is the closest that an American audience can come to what Athenians felt at the Theater of Dionysus in the fourth century B.C.: union through exaltation by the events on the stage.

At *La Cage aux Folles*, the near-frenzy that tingled through the huge auditorium during the show, the rapture with which the audience responded to every purportedly comic or emotional line, to every musical number, even to the costumes and scenery, gave me a great deal more pleasure than the show itself. Dionysus might well have thought the occasion unworthy, but he couldn't have quarreled much with the effect.

The ecstasy went even further. When we all came out of the Palace Theatre after the show, a small crowd had gathered to watch us. It wasn't opening night; there were no celebrities and flashbulbs. People just wanted to gaze enviously at the elect group that had been admitted to the temple, that had been privileged to witness the most desirable rite that Broadway currently offers.

Well, what *is* this wonder of the age, which had huge box-office lines before it reached New York, which seemed divinely ordained as a smasheroo even before it opened out of town? It turns out to be a paradox: an up-to-the-minute subject in comfy, old-fashioned garb. That subject is gay rights, the right to gay life. The structure of the show, its song and dance and the architecture of its book, would have delighted your grandparents.

Those who saw the popular French film on which the show is based will be less surprised at the paradox, because the film itself was a conventional farce with an unconventional twist. A young Frenchman is bringing his fiancée and her stuffy parents home to dinner with his father, who owns a nightclub in St. Tropez. Father lives with his club's star, who, in farces of the past, would have been, say, a stripper. The complications would have come from disguising the stripper as a *Hausfrau* to fool the prospective in-laws. Here "she" is a transvestite, a drag queen called Zaza. (The show's title means cage of queens.) So the problem is to pass "her" off as a him, a pal. A couple of decades ago, the club owner had a heterosexual fling, hence the son; since then, he and Zaza have been father and "mother" to the boy, and now Zaza's devoted, "maternal" self must be shunted aside. Feelings are hurt; troubles, as troubles will, ensue.

That's the nub of the musical's story, too, and it's so thin, conflict is so long delayed, that a stopgap dramatic moment has to be whipped up to bring down the Act I curtain, a conflict so flimsy that it's resolved six minutes into Act II.

Stock though the show's texture is, much of it is competent Broadway trade goods, professionally turned out. The songs by Jerry Herman are not up to his *Mame* level, thus are automatically below his *Hello, Dolly!* level, but he's a veteran Main Street tailor of standard patterns. He knows how to fashion the expected *shapes* of musical numbers, and if his melodic invention is not what it has been—possibly excepting "With You on My Arm"—Herman, helped by Jim Tyler's adroit orchestrations, delivers a score that is tolerable without being memorable.

MARTHA SWOPE

George Hearn as Zaza: His acting has a sometimes touching verity.

Arthur Laurents, who directed, has done such work before, though he is better known as a playwright (*The Time of the Cuckoo*, *Home of the Brave*) and as author of books for musicals (*West Side Story*, *Hallelujah, Baby!*). Here Laurents has shopped up a batch of trite delayed turns and poignant exits, mellow moments and carpentered climaxes, as if from a mail-order catalog for directors. Despite his dismal staging, however, he gets a passable performance from Gene Barry (yes, Bat Masterson of TV) as the "husband" of the middle-aged homosexual pair; Barry comes across as the ace used-car salesman of all time. Laurents gets an even better performance from George Hearn as

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THEATER

MARTHA SWOPE

Gene Barry, William Thomas Jr., and George Hearn.

Zaza, the "wife." Hearn deals smoothly with the external feminine aspects—gesture, movement, and management of clothes, including spike heels—and, more important, he has enough insight into Zaza's drag character to give his acting a sometimes touching verity.

John Weiner, as Barry's affianced son, is a walking declaration of industrial hardship—current hardship in the theatrical industry. So few musicals are produced these days that there's only a small corps of available juveniles from which to select. Hence, I suppose, Weiner. On the other hand, the older generation is also cornily represented by Jay Garner as the stuffy future father-in-law.

The chorus line of a dozen show "girls" (show persons?), the dancers in the St. Tropez nightclub, consists of ten transvestites and two women. The twelve are identically costumed; still it's easy to spot the women. Near the end of the show, the twelve disclose their genders through street clothes, and the audience cheers as if they all deserved Medals of Honor for social bravery. I thought they deserved praise for surviving Scott Salmon's choreography. This is Salmon's Broadway debut after choreographing "over 100 network TV shows." About ninety-nine of them spilled over onto the Palace stage.

One of our best costume designers, Theoni V. Aldredge, splashes in with appropriate art nouveau parody. Aldredge has discernment among vulgarities. For *Dreamgirls* (a much better show), she supplied an endearing garishness; here she kids the dance-line costume vulgarity with an edge that underscores the camp of the queens' dancing. David Mitchell's scenery is notable because it does nimbly what musical-show scenery has been doing at least since *Mame* in 1966: much of the time, it changes before our eyes. Not only does one setting flow into another, but the proscenium opening narrows or widens as needed. This is more than extravagant display: it's an acknowledgement of the audience's conditioning through the flexibility and shot variation of film and TV.

Yet, after all the pro and the less-pro comment, we are left with one fundamental item of dismay, the debasement that is probably the reason for this show's tidal-wave success: the book. It was adapted from the film (itself adapted from a Paris hit play) by Harvey Fierstein. He is the author of, and played the lead in, *Torch Song Trilogy*, the truest and most enlightening American play about homosexuality that I know. (See *SR*, March 1982.) *Trilogy* began in the tiniest of off-off-Broadway premises, then moved to off-Broadway, then to Broadway, where it rightly won this year's Tony Award for best play. Presumably success brought Fierstein a chance at the Big Time, to write the book of this musical, and much of the press is rhapsodic about how, after a long, hard struggle, he has made good. To me, he has made goo.

Trilogy dramatized the difference of the homosexual from the heterosexual, the rights and benefits of that difference. Because he told some truths, Fierstein was given the chance to betray those truths, and he grabbed the chance. Admittedly the script of the French film was undistinguished, but Fierstein went to work to make it less distinguished. His book, abetted by Herman's lyrics, tells us over and over that basically we're all alike, that the homosexual has triumphed by finding the courage to proclaim what he is, and that he is just one more human being, interchangeable with anyone else on the block, except for the way he makes love.

This isn't equality; this is mush. This is to say that blacks are no different from whites, Jews from Gentiles, women from men, when the real value of these groups is in their differences. The test of any sane society is in its ability to welcome those differences, to grow by them, not to push them all into a cross-cultural Waring blender.

If the book of *Cage* had been by Laurents, whose *West Side Story* cosmeticized urban racial strife and whose *Hallelujah, Baby!* reduced American black history to fortune-cookie homilies, the effect would be no less disgusting, but the surprise would be less. Fierstein turned his back on a brave and talented achievement to boil up some golden molasses. His book for his musical makes the plush audience feel, at least for two and a half hours, that the difficulties and pain and acuteness and sensibilities of homosexual life are the same as those of any other life, that we all just haven't understood one another up to now, that *Cage* brings that understanding, and that our self-congratulation—which is what the closing ovation amounts to—seals a compact of social unity forever. No wonder it's a hit.

Still, the fact that it's a hit is, contradictorily, the most redeeming thing about it. The utterly extrinsic power of the Broadway hit, as such, almost compensates for the show's social pabulum. Success, not social honesty, is what the show is for, what Broadway is for. Broadway is the only American theater locus that can provide gargantuan success in a world where success is prime. That's why, despite sags, Broadway will survive: it makes the smasheroo possible. ■

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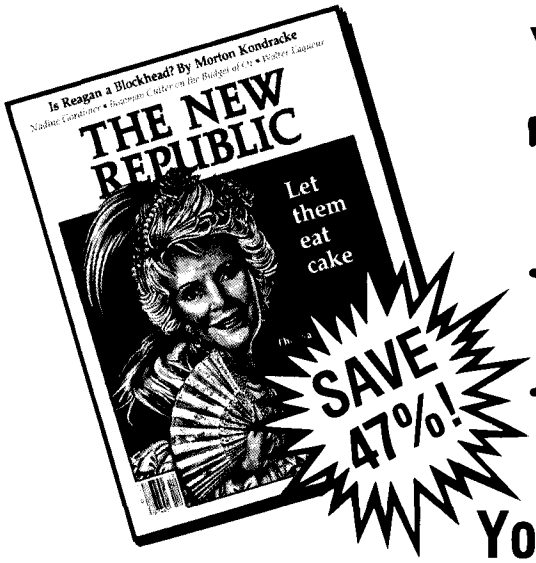

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Gregory Sandow

Unadulterated Mozart

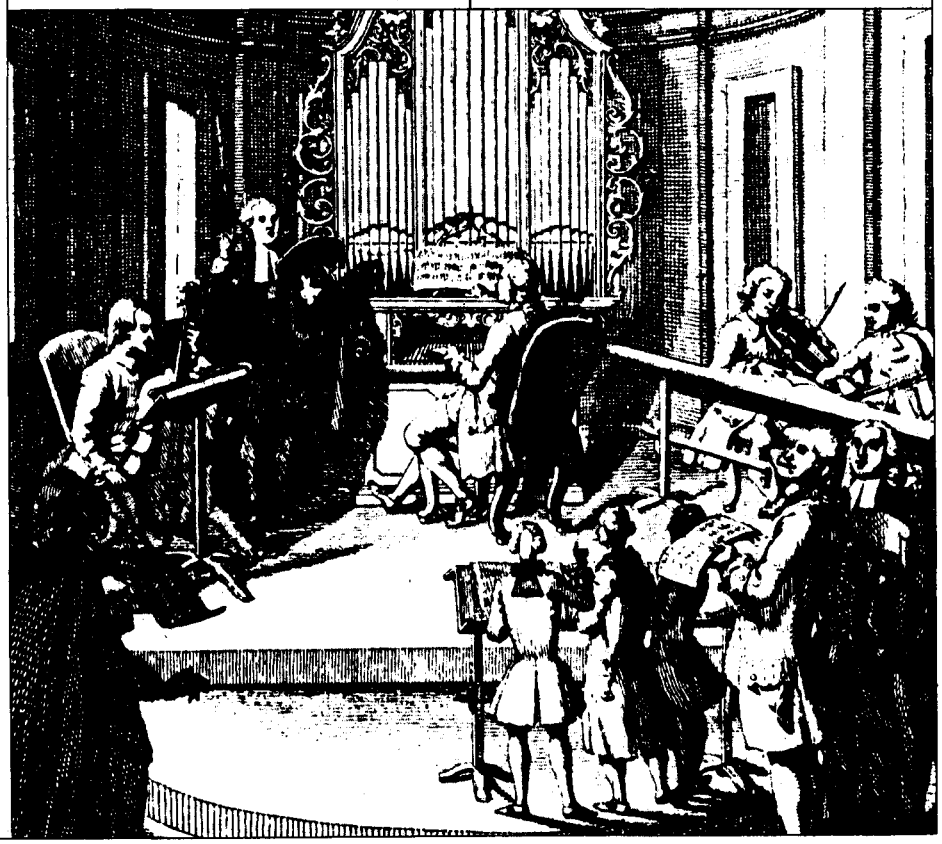
I've looked with narrowed eyes at Mozart's sixty-five symphonies, played on instruments of his time by the Academy of Ancient Music. Hear the ones he wrote in his teens for their tasty sound, the sound he had in mind when he composed. Stay away from his more personal later works, killed by performers who understand his time but not him.

So I wrote last issue. But space was short. With more space I might have said that the record industry justifies itself with releases that allow us to hear both repertoire and a style of performance we're not likely to encounter live. I might have added that L'Oiseau-Lyre put its elegant product in packaging that touches a collector's grateful heart. On the covers of the seven boxed sets are period paintings of cities where Mozart lived; on the covers of the booklets inside are pictures of Mozart at each stage of his life (in Volume I he's a child with delicate hands; in Volume VI he's an improbably white-wigged adult).

I might also have said that these aren't the only original-instrument recordings of Mozart and other composers of his age. Far from it: I'd need more than a year to survey them all. I've even heard large-scale works: Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, for instance, not often programmed by anybody, but plodding and out-of-tune in an original-instrument performance by the Collegium Aureum, conducted by Wolfgang Goennenwein (Pro-Arte 2PAL-2005); or Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, with Sigiswald Kuijken conducting La Petite Bande (Accent ACC 8223-24, distributed by AudioSource, 1185 Chess Drive, Foster City, CA 94404). Many critics haven't liked the latter. I think it's as pure as the Elysian Fields in the opera, though its weaknesses—tame Furies, a chilly countertenor Orfeo—are obvious.

Beethoven's Third and Seventh Symphonies by the Collegium Aureum (Pro-Arte PAL-1029 and PAD-123) will fascinate specialists, who will sift through punchless performances to notice that thin-toned eighteenth-century violins still have a bite that gives the repeated chords in bars seventy-six and seventy-seven of the Third Symphony slow movement more force than they have on modern instruments.

Haydn's Symphonies Nos. 42 and 43 (Titanic Records, Ti-101) by Monadnock Music of Peterborough, New Hampshire, are correct, but after several hearings they become dull and a little heavy. (Early music thrives in Boston: hence, early instruments each summer in Peterborough). At the opposite extreme are Haydn's first fourteen symphonies—*not* Nos. 1 through 14; the traditional numbering, it seems, doesn't put the works in anything near their proper order—played by a British group called L'Estro Armonico, with both the verve and clumsiness of a baby who has just learned to walk. These are on two three-disc sets from Saga Records (Haydn 1 and 2. The same group plays more Haydn symphonies on CBS I3-M-37861, which I haven't heard). According to its list of members, L'Estro Armonico is a reshuffling of the Academy of Ancient Music, though it's smaller and has a different director. Shouldn't it still play as well?



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Isn't anything really good? Yes: Mozart's four Flute Quartets, played with effortless ease by Barthold, Sigiswald, and Wieland Kuijken (flute, violin, and cello), joined by violist Lucy van Dael (Accent ACC 8225). The flute is far airier than a modern one, and the strings are more nasal, as if they speak with a long-dead regional twang. On their own and in La Petite Bande (under Sigiswald's direction), the Kuijkens are the most fluent early-music team around, or at least the one most likely to convince skeptics that original instruments aren't just a dodge for people who aren't very good by modern-instrument standards. I'll even retreat fifty years through the history of music and urge you to hear the Kuijkens' ebullient recordings of Bach's Violin Concertos and Orchestral Suites (Pro-Arte PAD-124 and 2PAD-205).

But what about Mozart on modern instruments? Most comforting of anything I've sampled in the past year is the D minor Piano Concerto, reimagined—in a quietly modern style that's both thoughtful and straight from the heart—by Sir Clifford Curzon and Benjamin Britten, who conducts the English Chamber Orchestra (London CS 7251). On the other side of the record, they prod the B flat Concerto, K. 595, just a bit too much; but in both works each phrase is shaped with an understanding that compares to the blunt archaeology of the Academy of Ancient Music as the mature reflection of an adult compares to the enthusiasm of a child.

The young Glenn Gould is as distinctive, if also more pointed—and, unsettlingly, less thoughtful—in a 1960 performance of the C minor Concerto, reissued as part of the new mid-priced CBS Masterworks Portrait line (MP 38752). On the flip side a far older Rosina Lhevinne plays the C major Concerto, K. 467, with a sure, sometimes aggressive touch as right (or wrong) for Beethoven as for Mozart. She is crassly partnered by a student orchestra from Juilliard, where she taught.

Sviatoslav Richter and Riccardo Muti are gentler but oddly gutless on an Angel release (DS-37740). Even so, it is worth hearing for Muti's affectionate conducting of the early Symphony No. 24, and, in the concerto, for cadenzas by Benjamin Britten that need his conducting to give the rest of the work a tone from which a departure to our own time makes sense.

These are the records I've liked, to which I'll add Muti's chaste new *Così fan tutte* (Angel DSCX-3940), reserving more detailed comment for our next issue.

On discs I can do without, Vladimir Ashkenazy plays and conducts the F major and C minor Concertos as if they were roads with climate and scenery that never change (London CS 7174, part of a series); Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducts Symphonies Nos. 34 and 35 like a brass-plated Prussian drillmaster (Telefunken 642703 AZ, part of a series); Rafael Kubelik conducts Nos. 35 through 39 with honesty, but without much dynamic range, feeling, or rhythmic bounce (CBS IM 36729 and 36730). James Levine lets the Chicago Symphony bang through Nos. 40 and 41 with playing so crass that it's all but a rebuke to his presence on the podium (RCA1-4413). The Vienna Philharmonic is much more tractable on a new Deutsche Grammophon release. Levine winds them up, so to speak, and lets them play *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* and the *Posthorn Serenade*, with results that are silky but dull, like a baronet who, as Jane Austen might say, lacks conversation. Compared to that even the worst original-instrument performances sound lively and fresh. ■

Levine lets the Chicago Symphony bang through . . . with playing so crass that it's all but a rebuke to his presence.

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Thomas H. Middleton

Game of the Name

My friend Gary Gilson does a show on Minneapolis-St. Paul public television. Never having been to either Minneapolis or St. Paul, I've never seen the show, but, knowing Gary, I feel sure that the show, *Night-Times,* is always interesting, intelligent, and generally first-rate.

He sent me the text of part of a piece he did on his return from vacation this past summer. He had driven from St. Paul to Martha's Vineyard, off Cape Cod, and on his return he was struck by the strange and wonderful place names he saw, "Indian names, mostly," he says. The East Coast has no monopoly on these names, of course. You see them all over the United States, from Yosemite and Sequoia through Winnemucca, Oskaloosa, and Pottawatomie, to Apalachicola and Okefenokee, among hundreds of others. Canada and Mexico are equally blessed with these place names, so exotically American. (Is that an oxymoron? Yes, but with the emphasis on the *moron,* since the words, which are quintessentially American, only seem exotic to our anglicized ears.) But I responded with particularly warm nostalgia to Gary's observations. The Indian names in the northeastern states seem to me more arresting than those of the South and the West. Perhaps that's in large part because they bring back my youth.

Gary says, "As soon as I rolled off the ferry" (the ferry from Martha's Vineyard to the mainland), "I started noticing wonderful place names. . . and I started writing them down. By the time I was into Pennsylvania, I had a page full, and to pass the time, I arranged them alphabetically, and I discovered in them a kind of music. Only half the letters of the alphabet are represented. The list is heavy on the M's, and I know a couple of the names aren't Indian at all, especially the last one. These are lakes and towns and rivers and beaches and highways and ponds. . . . There was Agawam and Allamuchy, Chappaquiddick, Chincoteague, Cos Cob, and Cutthyhunk. Then Hammonasset, Housatonic, Hopatcong, Katama, Madaket, Makoniky. Manasquan, Mattakesset, Mattapoisett, Menemsha. Then Moddus, Moosic, Moosup. Nantasket, Nanuet, Narragansett, Neponset. Netcong, Niantic. A single O—Ogunquit. Pawcatuck, Pawtucket, Peconic, Picatinny. Quassapaug, Quinnipiac. Setauket and Shamokin. Siasconset, Sippewisset, Squibnocket. Taconic and Tashmoo. Waramaug and Wasque. Zelienople."

"WEE-HAWKEN!"

I suspect that Zelienople was named by some boosters who were familiar with the Greek *zelos* and wanted the name of their town to express great zeal. "Yessir, we're high on Zelienople!" And why not? I looked for Zelienople in my atlas, and there it was in western Pennsylvania, and I'd guess it's tucked into the Alleghenies, where the world doesn't get much prettier.

Gary must have seen some of those names before he "rolled off the ferry." He probably saw Ogunquit, which is in Maine, before he got to Martha's Vineyard, and Chappaquiddick and Menemsha are on the Vineyard. But I quibble. I, too, hear the "kind of music" he found.

I decided to search for the meanings of some of these Indian names. I went to the library, and the lady at the reference desk lent me a book called *A Dictionary of Place Names,* by Kelsie B. Harder (Van Nostrand Reinhold). While I had the book, which was limited to use in the library, I looked up one of my favorite place names: Weehawken. I've loved the name Weehawken since I was a child. Weehawken is just across the Hudson from New York, via the Lincoln Tunnel. The name has always sounded to me like the bray of an outraged jackass (no offense, Weehawkenians). I was delighted when cartoonist Walt Kelly used "Weehawken!" as an expletive. Kelly had a great ear for the music in names. That, I suspect, is one of the principal reasons he placed his possum, Pogo, in the Okefenokee Swamp. On at least one occasion, Albert, Pogo's alligator friend, shrieked, "WEE-HAWKEN!" as a cry of either pain, outrage, discovery (a sort of Indian "Eureka!"), or exultation. It works for all four, and small wonder. As I say, I looked it up, and here's what *A Dictionary of Place Names* says *Weehawken* means: It's Algonquian: "Variously translated as 'maize land,' 'place of gulls,' 'rocks that look like trees,' 'at the end' (of the Palisades), and 'field lying along the Hudson.' " Now *that,* friends, is a grab bag of a word.

While I was at it, I looked up *Minneapolis. Polis,* we all know, is Greek for city. *Minne* is Siouan for water. So *Minneapolis* is one of those only-in-America Siouan-Greek words. It means water city. No, *Minnesota* does not mean soda water or seltzer. It means "water reflecting the shade of the sky," which is why Minnesotans, being Zelienopolitans at heart, like to think of it as the "Land of Sky-Blue Waters." Even when it's raining. ■

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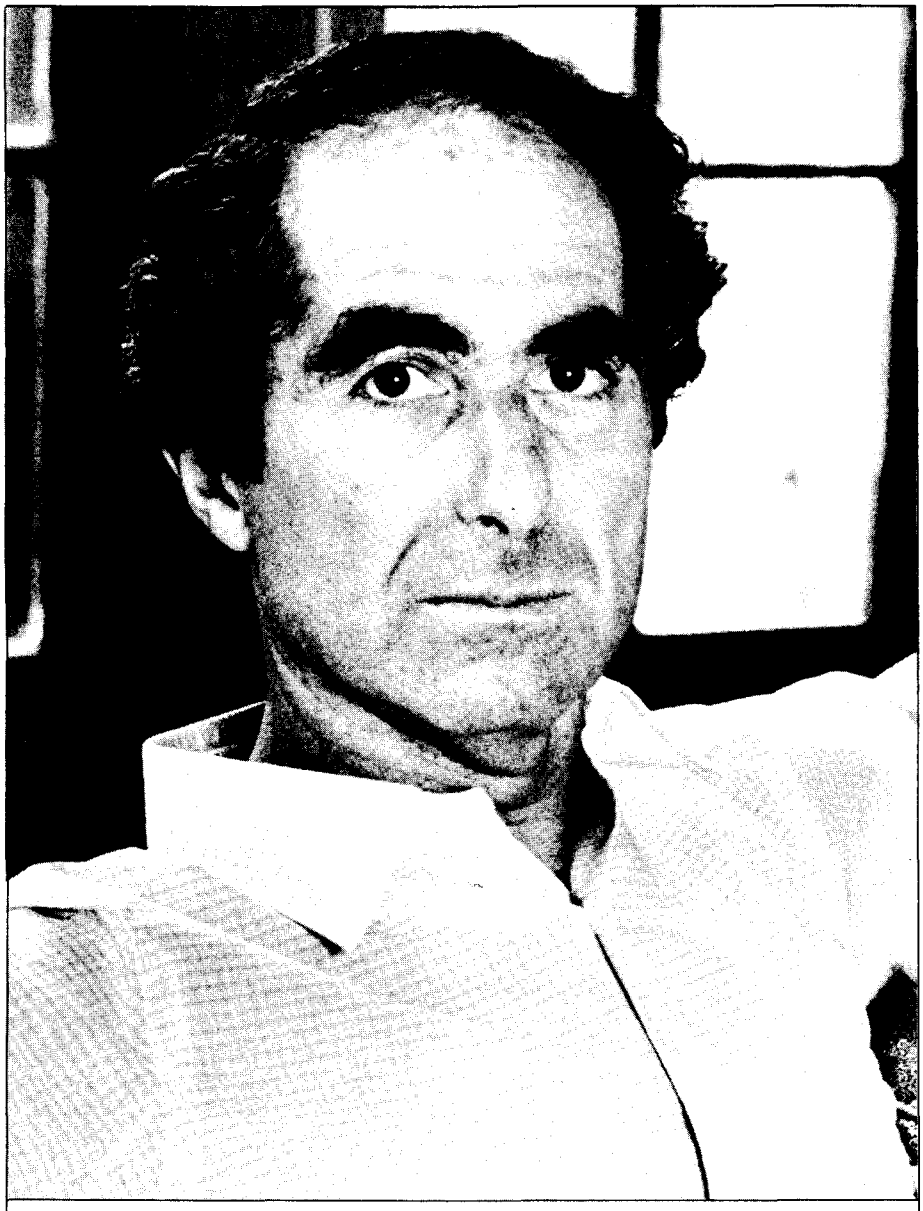
INGE MORATH



Philip Roth.

Fortunate Misfortune

The Anatomy Lesson
by Philip Roth. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 291 pp., $13.95
Reviewed by Bruce Allen

THIS IS THE concluding volume of Roth's "Zuckerman trilogy," and it's a far more ambitious and uneven novel than either *The Ghost Writer* (1979) or *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981).

In the first of these books, we observed budding novelist Nathan Zuckerman on an eye-opening visit to his literary mentor, E.I. Lonoff, a reclusive eminence resembling both Bernard Malamud and Isaac Bashevis Singer, and in the throes of his infatuation with a mysterious young woman who also disappoints his expectations. Its successor detailed the consequences of Zuckerman's fame following his notorious novel *Carnovsky*, a confessional bombshell that ripped the lid off a nice New Jersey Jewish upbringing, and that unmistakably called to mind Roth's own *Portnoy's Complaint*. Specifically, those consequences were Zuckerman's harassment by eccentric autodidact Alvin Pepler, and his wounded family's chagrin and resentment, culminating in what Zuckerman thinks is his father's deathbed curse.

The Anatomy Lesson shows us Zuckerman in mid-career: it's 1973; he's 40, rich, internationally renowned—and miserable. He's in a neck brace, in constant physical agony, and also victimized by the indignity of "premature hair loss." Upper-back pain and lower-body appetites disturb his concentration, yet none of Zuckerman's several compliant women can stimulate those old creative energies. Worse than that, his mother's death sits on his psyche like a collapsed wall. For the first time in his life, this smoothly professional writing machine cannot write.

What got him to this point? Guilt, undoubtedly. He's "the remorseful son of the dead parents, the author of *Carnovsky*"; "a nasty, nothing fellow . . . who behind the mask of fiction had punished his adoring mother for no reason." Few sufferers in literature since Kafka's characters have castigated themselves with such masochistic eloquence. "Dante got out of hell sooner than you'll escape Zuckerman-Carnovsky," he admonishes himself.

Suicide beckons, but Zuckerman eventually hits on a better plan: he'll give up writing; return to the University of Chicago, scene of his adolescent triumphs; and study to become a

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doctor. Opinions from friends and lovers are quickly forthcoming: this is "a sick man's delusion about healing himself"; everyone will recognize him as "a writer who doesn't want to be alone anymore with his typewriter and is sick of screwing his girlfriends."

One of this novel's chief delights is the comic polyphony of agitated voices that support Zuckerman's own, which is itself a marvel of flexibility, precision, and vigor, equally capable of expressing inspired one-liners—"If a Jew wants to make money running a brothel, he'll make it sound like an adult day-care center"—and incisive self-understanding—"How unreasonable I am, how idle and helpless and overprivileged, how fortunate even in my misfortune."

The minor characters are vividly alive, and are neatly worked into the story's several subplots. Zuckerman's subdued rivalry with his "good" brother Henry reaches its delirious limit after Henry reads a 5,000-word eulogy at their mother's funeral. His reunion in Chicago with old school friend Bobby Freytag, now a doctor, leads Zuckerman into an unhappy-family situation that throws a pitiless, garish light on his own. His brief encounter with a sidewalk hustler-chiropractor, "dolorologist" Doctor Kotler, hastens his journey to Chicago, and his affair with Polish refugee "hair therapist" Jaga makes him comprehend the moral primacy of "suffering that isn't semi-comical."

In the most imaginative of the novel's sequences, our hero broods at length and in depth over the savage review given him by eminent Jewish critic Milton Appel (Irving Howe, I presume), an admirer of Zuckerman's early work who declares *Carnovsky* guilty of portraying Jews unrealistically and maliciously. At Appel's instigation, the apostate novelist is invited to write "on behalf of Israel" for *The New York Times,* on the occasion of the October War, and this "hypocrisy" reawakens Zuckerman's dormant imagination. In two long, hilarious conversations (they're really monologues), he masquerades as "pornographer" Milton Appel, publisher of *Lickety Split* magazine and self-styled defender of freedom. ("I provide a service for the common man. . . . I legitimize feelings in people as real as anybody else.") This is dazzlingly funny stuff, the best of its kind Roth has written since *Portnoy.*

There are other virtuoso scenes and sequences. Amusing accounts of Zuckerman's desperate visits to doctors are counterpoints to his meticulous descriptions of modest physical actions—typing, holding a pen, reading—he convinces himself he can no longer perform. The extended portrayal of Zuckerman's complex reaction to his mother's death is simultaneously absurd and moving. And there's a funny, beautifully detailed recollection of his life as an undergraduate smart aleck twenty years earlier. It reveals the roots of his awkwardness with his parents, and eventual alienation from them.

At its best, *The Anatomy Lesson* expertly dramatizes the complications engendered by what I'd call Zuckerman's Choice: the decision to turn the material of his life into art. When he complains, "I cracked a few jokes about playing stinky-pinky in Newark, and you'd think I'd blown up the Knesset," the nervy, ribald rhetoric adroitly maintains momentum. But when he bogs down in impassioned defenses of his artistic integrity—"That writing is an act of imagination seems to perplex and infuriate everyone"—we begin to nod. Alex Portnoy's howls of rage and pain were involving, and funny, because we knew we were hearing in them something new—the cry of the adult Jewish male who wants permission to be the slavering sexual beast he knows he really is, not the well-brought-up boy of his family's careful traditions. Zuckerman's complaints are only intermittently compelling.

I'm puzzled by the novel's conclusion, too. Though Zuckerman has suffered a melodramatic introduction to "pain that was ruthless and inescapably real," and seems to have comprehended the necessary limits of the novelist's purview, he is still in the grip of his obsession to become a doctor, "as though he still believed that he could unchain himself from a future as a man apart and escape the corpus that was his."

Is this a considered final decision, or only further evidence of Zuckerman's continuing instability? It's true that the book's ambiguity and double focus—on its protagonist's suffering, and on his suspicions about its genuineness—generate much of its energy, and that Zuckerman's confusion is his most attractive characteristic. Still, I think it's awkward to end a purportedly completed trilogy at such an enigmatic point. Nathan Zuckerman has proved to have some of the vividness and resilience of such recurring contemporary literary characters as John Updike's Harry Angstrom and Thomas Berger's Carlo Reinhart. It will be interesting to see whether Roth feels obliged to return to him. ■

A Stubborn Decency

Laura Z: A Life
by Laura Z. Hobson, Arbor House, 410 pp., $17.95
Reviewed by Anne Roiphe

THE TRIUMPHANT END of this autobiography shows us Laura Hobson reaping the rewards of success with the publication in 1949 of her best-selling book, *Gentleman's Agreement*, a landmark event that exposed the polite but deadly anti-Semitism of postwar America. In *Laura Z.*, purported to be the first of two volumes, Hobson tells us the story of her journey to this success, and her story is so full of activity, independence, ups and downs, friendships, and betrayals, that the reader is in a constant state of amusement and awe.

Hobson is the daughter of the first editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward.* Her socialist mother wrote a column for the Yiddish newspaper, *The Day.*

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Her father had been tortured in a Russian prison before the turn of the century, and Hobson carried with her his passionate opposition to injustice and political tyranny. At the same time, she made the typical second-generation transition into America's college-educated middle class. But even as Hobson became a highly paid promotion writer for *Time* and *Life* magazines and moved into a circle of such powerful people as Henry and Clare Boothe Luce, Dorothy Thompson, and Sinclair Lewis, she remained a troubled outsider. Agents, publishers, authors, journalists, and psychoanalysts all dined with her. Some became lovers and others friends. Hobson shows us how, over and over again, she fell in love with men who were charming and urbane, yet failures in the crucial matter of loving another human. But she was a feminist long before feminism became de rigueur. She courageously sought out psychoanalysis to help her put the events of her life in perspective, and through hard work gained sufficient strength to take responsibility for herself, financially and emotionally. She adopted a child as a single parent and later gave birth to a son whose father she never married. She made a family without waiting for anyone's permission.

The book is not only filled with interesting tales of the important literary folk of the Thirties and Forties, but it is overflowing with money talk: how much she was paid at each job, for each story, and for each screenplay, and how she managed to juggle and borrow money from friends to write her first and second novels. This information reveals how difficult it was for a single woman to be financially independent, with or without children. She never complains, but we can easily imagine the strain and fear she experienced while living on the edge, gambling on grasping that elusive gold ring.

Hobson began her career by writing promotion and advertising copy, and the direct, energetic style she uses in this book shows us that she must have been good at her work. The book reads as though Hobson were in the room with you, telling you the story of her life. She does so with the incredible vitality and stubborn decency that are the qualities of a good writer.

This kind of autobiography can easily become an exercise in narcissism, an exhibition of the self. Hobson knows that her life will appear glamorous to many people, despite her insecurities and emotional struggles. But she has not written the book for approval or vindication. This is a story of how politics and the social scene of the Twenties, Thirties, and Forties molded one woman. This is not a modest book; it is a tough, inspirational story told without frills and indulgences. Laura Hobson has lived an honorable life and has written a fascinating memoir. We can look forward to the second volume. ■

ALEX GOTFRYD

Laura Hobson.

Anne Roiphe is a novelist and journalist. Her most recent book is **Generation Without Memory**.

Dormant Justice

Winter's Tale
by Mark Helprin, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 673 pp., $14.95
Reviewed by Andrea Barnet

MARK HELPRIN IS best known for his luminous short story collections, *A Dove of the East and Other Stories,* and the critically acclaimed *Ellis Island and Other Stories,* the 1982 winner of the National Jewish Book Award. He has been repeatedly praised for his strong voice, and the tremendous diversity and imagination of his fiction. "He moves from character to character and from culture to culture, as if he'd been born and raised everywhere," wrote the late John Gardner. Indeed, Helprin seems as comfortable writing about the feverish obsessions of a bereaved, middle-aged German photographer as he is writing about the ruminations of an Israeli scout who sacrifices soldierly responsibility one night to sit with a dying dove. Whatever his subject, Helprin's stories are distinguished by a vivid sense of the heroic and an old-fashioned storyteller's feel for elaborate plots, fiercely beautiful imagery, and a mindful balance between naturalistic precision and startling imaginative flights.

Winter's Tale, his sprawling, wildly original second novel, reaches beyond the perimeters of his earlier work. The tale begins in the late nineteenth century with Peter Lake, a mythical character who, together with a flying white steed named Athansor, lives through centuries. When we first meet Peter, he is a child who has been abandoned by his mother on the shores of Ellis Island. He floats into the marshes of Bayonne, where a xenophobic clan of clam diggers rears him until the age of 12, when the group sends him to Manhattan to fend for himself.

Spirited off by the Rev. Overweary, a thoroughly Dickensian thug who runs a home for lunatic boys, Peter fast learns a number of unorthodox trades, eventually falling in with a band of burglars. Ten years pass before he makes his break and launches an independent career robbing the rich. On one such heist he

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JERRY BAUER

Mark Helprin.

meets the beautiful, consumptive Beverly Penn, daughter of a prominent newspaperman, and the two fall in love.

Peter's story soon becomes enmeshed in the dense tapestry of the city itself. There is the charmed city of the Penn family and friends, which includes a country house in a magical, icebound village forever caught in the nineteenth century; the city of the glitterati, with its memorable cast of sycophants—Craig Binky, a plump billionaire with a private blimp; Marcel Apand, a lecherous real estate tycoon; Boonya, one of a bevy of sweet-souled Scandinavians. And always there is the city of the poor, with its soot-blackened bums, barefoot lunatics, and the starving, blind, and abandoned.

It is in Helprin's city—the vast, magical, disorderly metropolis that is both Manhattan and the sum of all urban centers throughout the ages—where his metaphysical speculations on the nature of freedom, justice, memory, imagination, destiny, free will, and coincidence are finally played out. The story climaxes on the eve of the millenium, the dawning of a golden age in which justice will prevail, the dead will rise, and time will shatter. Manhattan is pitched into an apocalyptic conflagration, with monstrous encounters, unspeakable physical tests, and bloodcurdling battles between good and evil.

Helprin's dauntless virtuosity with language allows him to get away with dramatic effects that lesser writers wouldn't attempt. He describes the impossible with microscopic precision, and he summons the moods and myriad landscapes of the city with breathtaking poetry.

Yet, his decision to inflate the anarchy of urban life to fantastic proportions, and to use magic to effect crucial turns of plot, is not simply an author's surrender to self-indulgence. At the core of his epic fable is the question of justice in its deepest philosophical sense. "Who said that justice is what you imagine?" asks one character. "Can you be sure that you know it when you see it, that it can be manifest within a generation, ten generations, the entire span of human existence?"

Helprin makes Peter Lake live through several lifetimes because he conceives of justice as being unbound in time. "A tranquil city of good laws and clean streets is like a classroom of obedient dullards, whereas a city of anarchy is a city of promise," says the mayor, as he watches Manhattan burn. According to Helprin, justice comes from a struggle amid complexities, but it does not necessarily follow a just act. "A miracle is nothing more than dormant justice from another time arriving to compensate those it has cruelly abandoned," explains the mayor. Helprin resorts to the fantastic to create a model that fits his conception of justice, for outside the mythical landscape of his story, his vision cannot exist.

But none of this adequately reflects the extraordinary energy, abundance, and variety of this novel. A more coherent, abiding morality is conveyed in the innumerable peripheral stories, which range from high farce to gemlike parables. Again and again Helprin celebrates selfless love, a

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devotion to beauty, the desire to explore, and an acceptance of responsibility. And though the virtues win out, he is not guilty of bypassing the bleak.

Helprin's freewheeling use of fantasy at times eclipses his essential seriousness, diminishing the novel as a whole. Yet there is unquestionable genius in the book's marvelous individual pieces. Whether one likes *Winter's Tale* or not, one cannot fail to be transfixed by the utter exuberance of Helprin's imagination. ■

Andrea Barnet is a free-lance writer and book reviewer living in New York City.

BOOK BRIEFS

A Gathering of Old Men
by Ernest J. Gaines
Alfred A. Knopf, 215 pp., $13.95

BEAU BOUTAN, a Cajun farmer, is lying dead on a Louisiana plantation. Candy Marshall, the plantation's feisty overseer, proclaims herself the murderess as the community's elderly black farmers gather around her, each having shot one shell from his shotgun, each also claiming responsibility for Beau's death. This begins the story of a day in which the South's old order falls, through a series of stunning occurrences. For the dozen or so black men—Mat, Chimley, Tee Jack, Dirty Red, and the rest—barely able to carry their own guns, this may be the last chance in their inactive lives to do something worthwhile.

In earlier works such as *Bloodline* and *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman,* Gaines established himself as chronicler of the black American experience. Here he does not reserve his compassion solely for his ragtag band of impromptu soldiers. Even as we learn of the unspeakable horrors the dead man's father and his henchmen have inflicted upon their black neighbors, we are made to pity this bewildered Boutan patriarch. Mapes, the sheriff, earns some sympathy as he vainly tries to prevent the inevitable confrontation between the vengeful Boutans and the murderer. But the story moves beyond sentimentality and becomes a celebration of old age, for it is in old age that the black men find the strength to act and produce equality, where laws and demonstrations have failed.

Gaines eloquently describes the strata of our supposedly classless society. This novel is both a study of that society and a vivid description of a region still haunted by memories of a legendary aristocracy, a region peopled by blacks and whites each seeking to endure rather than to prevail. —TERESA LUNEAU

Wonderful Fool
by Shusako Endo
translated by Francis Mathy
Harper & Row, 237 pp., $13.95

LITERATURE IS littered with Christ figures—Melville's Billy Budd, Dostoyevsky's Prince Myshkin, Flannery O'Connor's Hazel Motes. Shusako Endo adds one more to the list: Gaston Bonaparte, a hulking, hopelessly idealistic Frenchman who arrives in postwar Japan determined to renew the communal spirit of the Japanese. Unlike his ancestor Napoleon, he tries to prevail by turning the other cheek, but he gets kicked, slapped, and finally knocked out cold by the various low-life characters he encounters. They can't figure out what to make of a man who trusts in human goodness and refuses to fight back. Is he a saint, or a fool? Or is he a fool because he remains saintly in a world inhospitable to saintliness?

Endo wrote *Wonderful Fool* in the late 1950s after a serious illness forced him to give up postgraduate study in France and return to his homeland. He was a devout Catholic, a rarity in a country of Shintoists and Buddhists. The strength of Endo's novel is the skill with which he uses the details of his own life to dramatize the malaise of postwar Japanese society. His gentle French giant, Gaston, spends most of his time in Japan pursuing a tubercular Japanese gangster named Endo. Endo, the character, spends most of his time trying to avenge the death of his brother, who was executed for war crimes on the perjured testimony of his fellow soldiers. Gaston tries, with mixed success, to lead Endo out of vengeance into grace.

Prostitutes, fortunetellers, and corporate middle managers all find their way into Endo's sprightly, picaresque tale. Yet his light touch is deceptively firm, his comic eye tempered with a keen sense of human suffering. If you have been thinking of looking into modern Japanese fiction, *Wonderful Fool* is a fine place to start.

—ADAM GUSSOW

Meditations in Green
by Stephen Wright
Scribners, 362 pp., $14.95

THIS IS A LOOK at the Vietnam War through the eyes of a man on drugs, a hybrid hallucination of the evening news and *Apocalypse Now*. Impressionistic glimpses of characters who appear and disappear, or reappear to die in battle or accident, add to the hallucinatory tone of the story of Spec. 4 James Griffin (1069th Intelligence Unit).

Intercut with scenes showing the war's boredom and terror are first-person accounts of Griffin's postwar life: more drug taking, visits from a friend bent on tracking down a hated sergeant, attempts to meditate like a plant (as suggested by a friend in the "pacification business").

This is not *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *The Naked and the Dead*. There is little characterization, traditional plot line, heroism, or morality. What Wright has done is meticulously depict a disordered mind and what caused it. He does not express a point of view or insight into what occurred as much as he conveys what the war felt like. For this he received the Charles Scribner's Sons Maxwell Perkins Prize for "a first novel of exceptional promise about the American experience." Wright does show exceptional promise. But readers who saw enough of the Vietnam horror on the evening news may want to wait for his next novel.

—PAMELA FEINSILBER

My Last Sigh
by Luis Bunuel
Alfred A. Knopf, 288 pp., $15.95

THE WORK OF Bunuel, though frequently banned and censored, sends critics and viewers into rapturous contemplation of its irrational, unforgettable images, some of the most famous in the history of the cinema. For the viewer who has delighted in Bunuel's world—where sexual perversity, cruelty, and ignorance are distributed judiciously among all classes—there has always been an impish, even innocent mischievousness behind all those barbed attacks at church and state.

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The black humor, the playfulness, and the pleasure of Bunuel's greatest films are also to be found in this straightforward, anecdotal autobiography, with its all-too-accurate title (Bunuel died only two months before the book was published). Though not for the reader who wishes to understand Bunuel's haunting images, *My Last Sigh* goes far to reveal the mind that conceived them.

Bunuel emerges from his autobiography neither as the pretentious symbol-maker nor as the blasphemous fiend that Italy proclaimed him after the release of *Viridiana*. He emerges instead as an immensely likable, modest man with a wicked sense of humor that leaves no taboo unexamined. "When I reached the age of 60," he writes, "I finally understood the perfect innocence of the imagination. 'Fine,' I used to say to myself. 'So I sleep with my mother. So what?' "

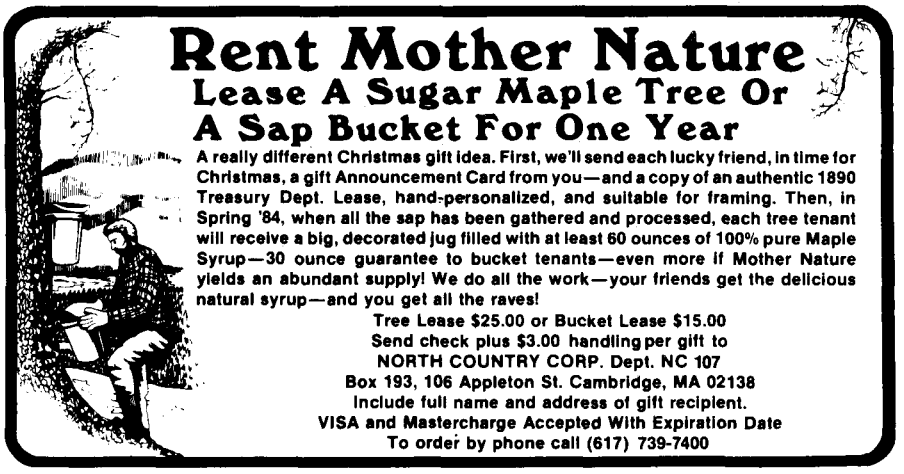
As a young man, his sharp irreverence threw him into the arms of the surrealists in Paris, where Salvador Dali, Man Ray, André Breton, Max Ernst, and Tristan Tzara were his friends and mentors. While the audacity of the surrealists fueled Bunuel's love of mystery and adventure, their infighting and posturing finally drove him away.

He writes also of Hollywood, the Spanish Civil War, and Mexico, in short, of all the places and experiences that inspired the elusive images and preposterous situations that make up his body of work. For those who appreciated him, *My Last Sigh* is a succor for the loss. —LAURIE WINER

The Circus of Dr. Lao
by Charles G. Finney
Vintage, 119 pp., $3.95

THE FIRST PERSON to notice something strange about the circus coming to Abalone, Arizona, is the proofreader of the advertisement that promises, among other wonders, a mermaid, a sea serpent, and a unicorn. But it is not false advertising; the creatures turn out to be prosaically real. We see through the creatures' eyes, and they seem less peculiar than the citizens who gawk at them. The author describes the everyday as though it were unfamiliar—as though life itself were being proofread.

The Circus of Dr. Lao won the American Booksellers Association's Most Original Novel award in 1936, but it appears to have been a novel of almost unassimilable originality—like its subject, a novelty as much as a novel. Consequently, it has gone in and out of print ever since. Edward Hoagland, in a savvy, circus-loving foreword, blames its size: "The book's shortness probably explains why it is not better known, compared to bulkier underground classics." But Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust,* to which Hoagland compares *Dr. Lao,* is similarly slim yet widely read. The difference is that West fits in with the social realists of his day and the glorification of Hollywood tawdriness that followed, while Finney, the literary counterpart of the painter Henri Rousseau, has no precursors and no progeny. His compact masterpiece endures in its singularity, in an obscurity as fantastic as anything Dr. Lao brings to Abalone. —ANNA SHAPIRO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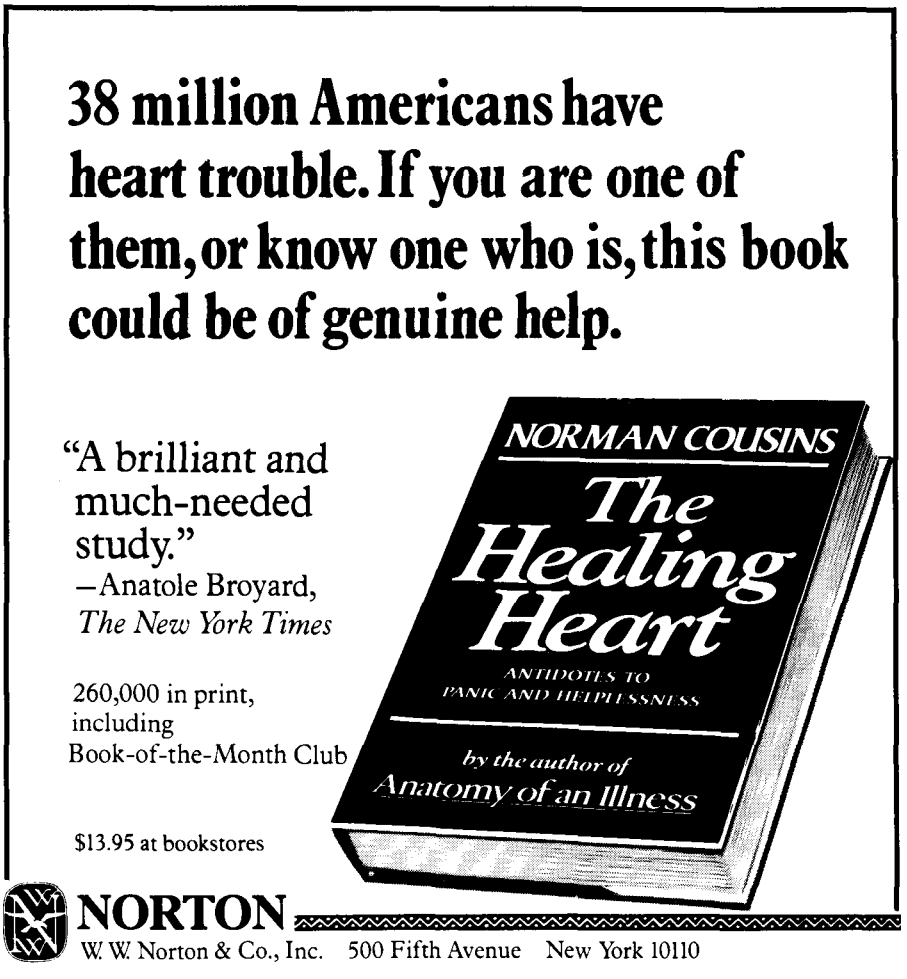
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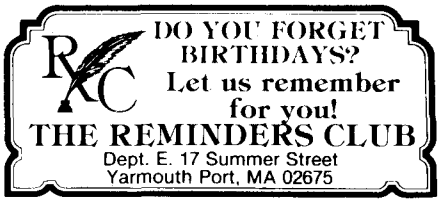

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DIVERSIONS

Competition No. 38

Working the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, as we incessantly do, we sometimes wander over to Alan Truscott's adjacent bridge column, where we read sentences like these:

Some declarers in no-trump were able to make 12 tricks when they escaped an opening heart lead and played West for the club queen.

That this sort of thing makes sense to bridge players we readily grant; to us it is gibberish—the sort of clearly English and syntactically immaculate gibberish that one gets in *Jabberwocky*, to be sure, but gibberish all the same.

Please send us a few sentences (actual, not invented, and indicate the source) that are normal to initiates but nonsense to the rest of us. Special affection will be shown those that are funny, surreal, printably lewd, and short.

Entries for Competition No. 38 must be received by November 30, and the winners will be announced in the January-February issue. Send submissions to *SR* Competition No. 38, *Saturday Review*, Box 704, Kingston, NJ 08528. Entries become the property of *SR*.

Winners of No. 37

The Fagan-on-the-Bed challenge elicited the best response of the new series, possibly because of the latitude with which the managing editor—who has his own ideas of calendrical time—set the deadline: September 31. (We left the latchstring out through October 1, just in case.) Morris Wexler of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, has the distinction of being the only one to spot this gaffe, and he did so with enough supercilious reproach to last us until our next little lapse.

Another sort of uniqueness was achieved by Margaret O. Smith of Charlotte, North Carolina, who took to heart as no one ever has our standard plea for brevity. Her entry in its entirety:

Queen: Go away!
Fagan: Why?

The human condition in four pitiless syllables. Awesome! But to business.

FIRST PRIZE goes to Jason Root of Toronto, who ignored the requirement of respectability (as you all did) but gave us the biggest laugh and surprise of the lot:

(Dawn. Michael Fagan sits at the foot of the Queen's bed smoking a cigarette.)

Q: (waking) Oh, darling, how many times have I asked you not to smoke in here!
F: But, I've never been 'ere, Mum.
Q: I know it's been awhile, but you needn't exaggerate. And would you spare me your comic accents at this hour? What time is it, anyway?
F: Just gone 'alf six.
Q: I must admit you do the cockney bit well, but I wish you'd stop it. You don't sound at all well. Have you a cold?
F: Could be. Wasn't 'alf cold on the embankment last night.
Q: (squinting) Er. . . hand me my glasses, there's a dear (puts them on). Oh, bloody hell, Michael! You did give me a turn. I thought it was Philip!

A poem by Maxine Pred Goldberg of Hollywood, Florida—suggestive but not so leeringly lubricious as might be feared—contained at least these quotable lines, to which we award SECOND PRIZE:

How good it is to see so fine a chap!
  What brings you to the chamber where I nap?
To chat, Mum, if it please you, and I pray
  That seeing me, you'll not turn me away.
I shan't, you know, for if the truth be told,
  I've yearned for company, so do be bold.
  Come closer, dear, and join me on my bed.
I can't Mum. (Here Fagan's face turned red.)
Why ever not? the Queen spoke sweet and clear.
  Are you o'erawed by me or filled with fear?
Oh no, Mum, it's not that. (He hung his head.)
  The reason I don't come onto your bed. . .
  Well, it's your breath, Mum. Morning mouth, you know.
  Have you some gargle? Then we'll have a go.

And you may have a go at completing this scene in whatever way is most congenial to your imagination. Goldberg's final rhymes are *sheet* and *complete*, if you must know, but that's all the help we'll give you.

A final few carps and kudos. Please, Patrick Richter of Chicago, stop referring to Her Majesty as Elizabeth Rex (to be followed by Charles Regina?): it puts into our heads thoughts we would prefer not to think. And there was so much of the "get thee hence varlet" level of diction that we found it downright refreshing when Frank Littler of Chicago had the Queen say: "Look, buster, do me a favor. Get lost!" Jack Pope, the irredeemable punster from San Francisco, won a smile by having the Queen ask Fagan, "Your palace or mine?" And Elaine Stallworth of Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, carpentered together this snatch of dialogue from two venerable clichés:

F: A funny thing happened to me on the way to the palace.
Q: We are not amused.

But we were. Let our ending come from Herbert Harvey of Morrisville, Pennsylvania, who imagined our two principals signing off as amicably as two caged co-anchors still on speaking terms:

Q: Good night, Mike.
F: Good night, Liz.

Puzzles

Literary Crypt No. 183

BUZZ OF JAZZ PJ QAFOSIZ IQICUAEF: QAFOS OF CBU VEILTH PJ CBU TIQLUT.

—VUELIET FBIG

Wit Twister No. 195

Edited by Arthur Swan

The object of the game is to complete the poem by thinking of one word whose letters, when rearranged, will yield the appropriate word for each series of blanks. Each blank corresponds to a letter of the word.

The _ _ _ _ _ _ holidays are
at an end.
The _ _ _ _ _ _ baits
his victim; friend greets friend;
While masters view their desks,
reprieve denied,
_ _ _ _ _ _ themselves,
and ponder suicide. —*A.S.*

Sept.-Oct. Answers

Literary Crypt No. 182

Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. —O. Bradley

Wit Twister No. 194

grenade, derange, angered, grandee, enraged

Tunick Double-Crostic No. 4

New Yorkers are fond of ridiculing the psychobabble of California. Californians fear the snarl of Manhattan grief and anxiety. Perhaps only Cleveland is perfect, with our white plastic belts and socks that barely cover the ankles.

—Herbert Gold: "Between Two Worlds"

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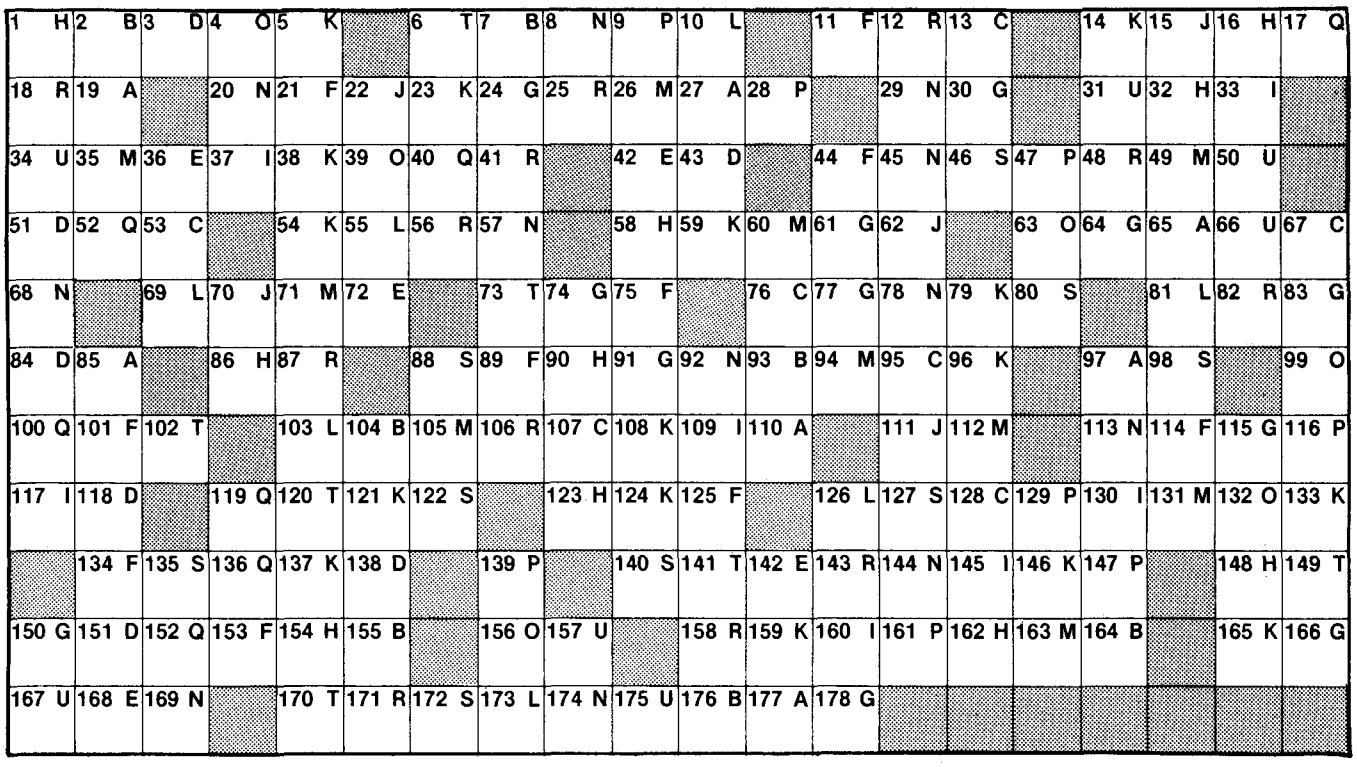

TUNICK DOUBLE-CROSTIC NO. 5

Letters of the clue answers (below) spell a quotation when put in the numbered squares (above). Reading down, the first letters of the clue answers spell the name of the quotation's author and the title of the work.

CLUES	ANSWERS
A. He wrote **Pelleas et Melisande**	65 110 97 27 85 177 19
B. Mean	7 104 176 93 2 164 155
C. Gridiron "zebra" shirt wearer	53 128 76 107 67 13 95
D. Equivocates	84 151 43 51 3 118 138
E. Northern hemisphere?	168 72 142 36 42
F. Plant with showy spurred flowers	21 11 44 134 153 125 75 114 89 101
G. Book by Luigi Barzini (1983) and Henry James (1878)	115 166 83 150 74 24 30 91 61 77 64 178
H. Legendary animal having horse's hindquarters	32 162 148 90 58 16 154 86 123 1
I. Relationship of organisms and environment	33 109 145 117 160 37 130
J. Burgundy's capital	111 15 22 70 62
K. 1908 chemistry Nobelist, investigated atom's nature (full name)	137 146 108 133 79 54 121 23 165 14 5 38 59 124 159 96
L. Tables—or wall furniture	173 55 126 69 81 103 10
M. "India rubberman's" forte	49 112 71 60 26 35 94 105 131 163
N. Of a chemical change produced by electric current	68 113 174 8 29 169 92 78 57 144 20 45
O. Czech river	132 63 156 99 4 39
P. Burlesque; debased imitation	116 129 139 161 47 28 9 147
Q. City on Lake Winnebago	52 152 17 136 100 40 119
R. Revealing **lapsus linguae** (2 wds.)	87 12 56 143 106 25 171 48 41 18 82 158
S. Ponderously	122 135 88 140 46 127 80 172 98
T. Easy and friendly	141 6 170 120 73 149 102
U. Roman water god; July 23 was his day	175 50 34 31 66 157 167

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Bruce VanWyngarden

The Price Is Right

At least two dozen books arrive at our offices every week. Tucked inside the front jacket of each is a form letter from the publisher's publicity department touting the book's importance and universal appeal, and suggesting that we quickly review it before it begins its inevitable rise to the top of the best-seller list. We may be from Missouri, but even out here we know that the only sure bets for best-seller status these days are books about cats, diets, or exercise. Everything else is a long shot. So until *Garfield's Workout Diet* comes along, we'll ignore the hype and use our own judgment as to which books to review.

One book arrived this week which disturbs me. It's called *Everything is Negotiable* by Gavin Kennedy. Kennedy begins with the premise that we're all wimps when it comes to buying things. His paramount law is that "there is no such thing as a fixed price." He adds that the absolute worst thing we can do is "accept the first offer."

At the end of each chapter there is a "Self-Assessment Test." Sample question: You are looking at a freezer in a showroom. The price on the ticket is $800. You decide to buy. Do you:

A. Inform the sales assistant of your decision?
B. Ask what they charge for delivery?
C. Insist on a discount for cash?
D. Ask what special discounts they are offering at present?

If you answered either A. or B., you are a hopeless pansy. You should have said D., and if the salesclerk said there were no discounts, you should have asked to see the manager.

There are, of course, situations when these rules are perfectly applicable. Very few people, for instance, buy a car at the sticker price; bargaining is expected. And certainly, in a case that involves large sums of money, such as a corporate merger, negotiating skills are essential. But Kennedy makes the mistake of applying this process to every purchase, from "toy troll dolls" in a gift shop—if you want three, ask the price for two and see if you can get a discount for the third—to paperback books—take a dogeared copy and a good copy to the cash register and "assault the fixed price with your evidence" by offering to buy the dogeared copy for less. Amazing. I have an image of Kennedy trying to negotiate a discount for a Big Mac—"How much if you leave off the special sauce?" I imagine the possibilities as Kennedy approaches an expressway tollbooth, jaw set, determined not to "accept their first offer."

Kennedy is confusing cost with value. By turning every purchase into a contest of wills, the pleasure we derive from an item becomes inversely proportional to what we pay for it.

I bought an apple this morning on the way to work. I didn't argue with the lady at the roadside stand; I just paid the price she asked. As I drove off, I looked out the window across the green fields of winter wheat. It was a day dreamed up by autumn's publicity department: trees in fall colors against a pale-blue morning sky, a best seller of a day. I crunched my teeth into the apple and tasted October—cool, sharp, and delicious. I don't know if I could have paid less for it or not, but I got a good deal on that piece of fruit.

I got a good deal on Mr. Kennedy's book, too. It lists for $8.95, but I didn't pay a thing for it. I'm willing to call it even. ■

"Carlisle, it has recently been brought to my attention that you're a can of New England style clam chowder."

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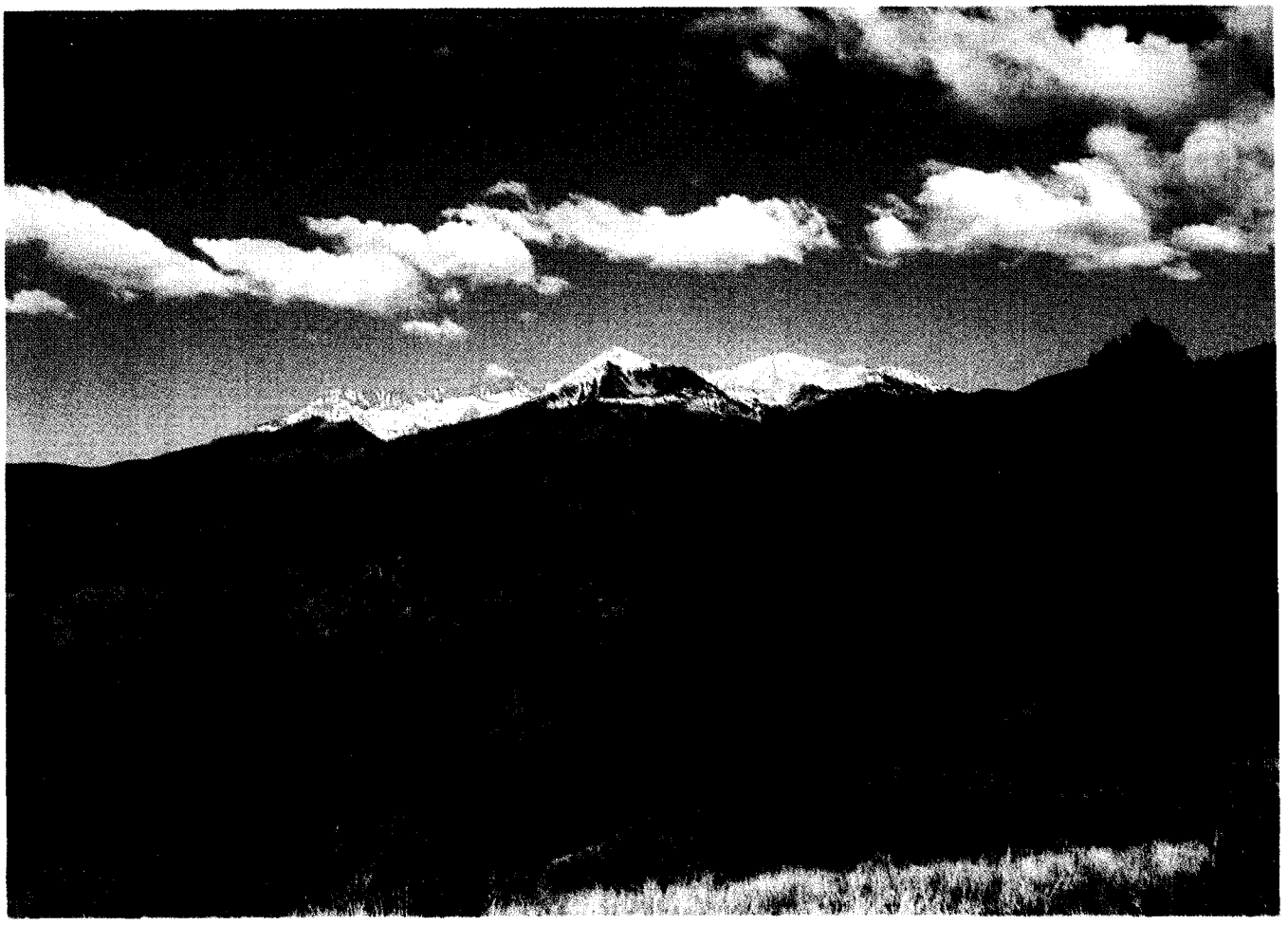

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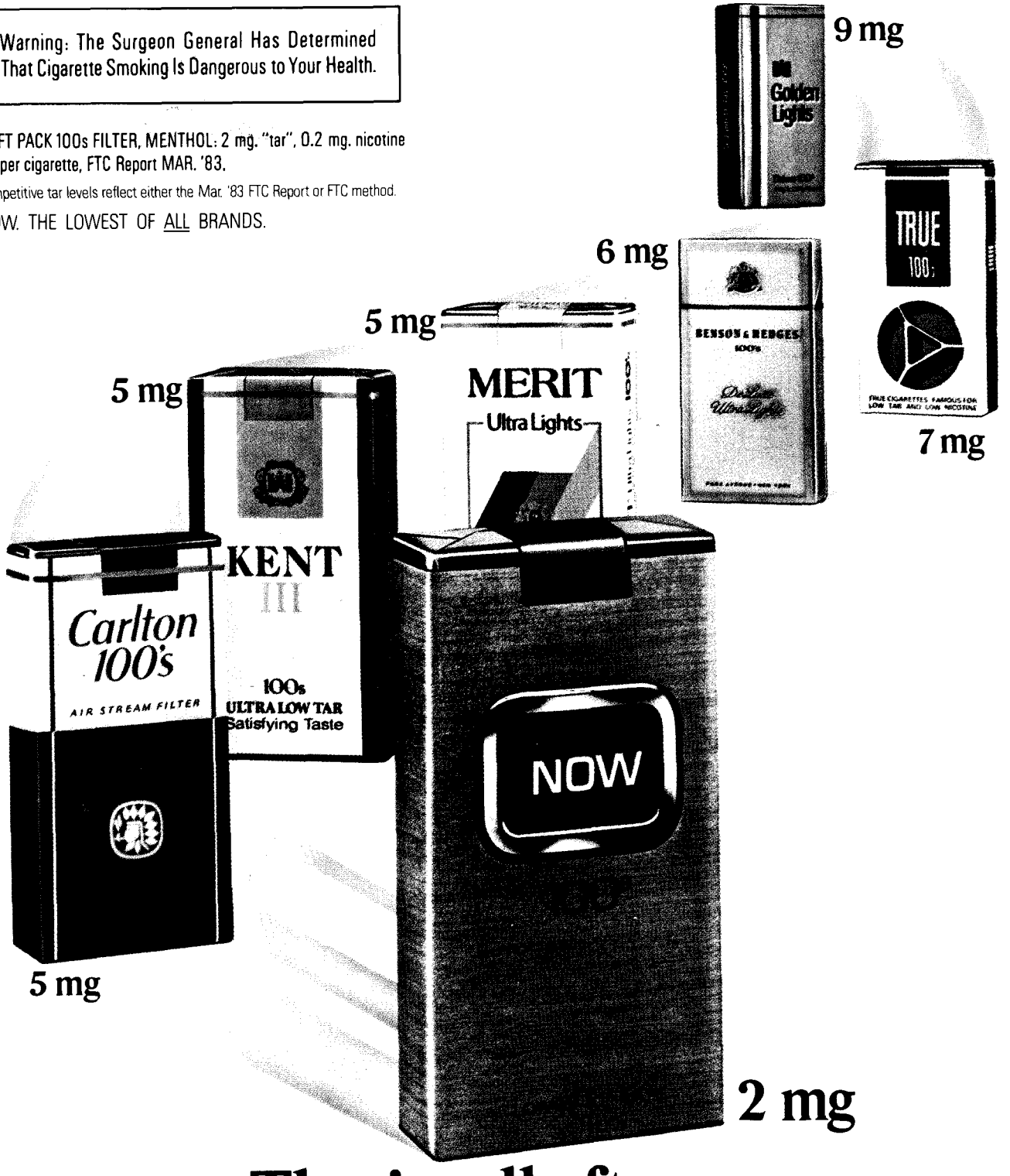

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